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THE MEANING OF LITERATURE

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THE MEANING OF LITERATURE

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PREFACE

LITERATURE is fine art, and as fine art it must enter into the experience of the reader or the student if he is to have any clear knowledge of its true meaning. The belief is common enough, perhaps even quite general, that fine art is primarily, if not wholly, a matter of feeling, and so whatever feeling may be excited by a work of art, at times even the simplest animal sensation, is accepted as artistic appreciation. But fine art means much more than this. It is a distinctly human product, and has its origin in the region of experience that differentiates man from the brute. It is usually a complex of thought, imagination, and emotion, intensified by the consciousness of beauty that urges and directs the soul of the artist to embody his treasure in some permanent form of expression. As fine art is the expression of the highest quality of human experience as it comes to life and reality in the mind of the creative artist, just so it is the mission of fine art to quicken a kindred experience in the mind of the student.

Literature is the fine art of language, and since language is the most complete and effective

means of expression, literature becomes the greatest of the fine arts. Literature cannot do what painting and music can do in the way of vividness of picture or range and variety of tone; but language is the instrument of thought, and, by virtue of language, literature can bring a richness and definiteness of thought not possible to any other art. Thought is the supporting element of mind, and through its copiousness and quality, feeling, otherwise vague and indistinct, is raised to the nobility and dignity of emotion. While it is the purpose of all art to exalt life, it is the special purpose of literature to bring the full power of the human mind functioning with all its faculties into the most complete harmonious action.

This full play of mind, raising the finest quality of human experience to the highest possible degree of intensity, is what we mean by literary appreciation. It means no more and no less than bringing to life in the mind of the reader and student the same thought, the imaginative insight, the high tension of feeling, that characterized the creative moods of the literary artist.

This is no easy task; for, while full appreciation comes readily enough to a few specially gifted minds, it comes to many others in varying degrees of completeness only with persistent effort and study. Serious thinking is by no means na-

tive or wide-spread among the human race, and imagination is apt to be sluggish except under special stimulation. Without thought and imagination there can be no feeling worthy of the name emotion. In this region of experience man's life becomes peculiarly his own; it is the promised land of the soul; but he may not possess it without hardship, without sacrifice, without struggle, defeat, and victory. To aid the earnest reader and student in mastering the difficulties that lie in the way of full and complete appreciation of the art of letters is the purpose of this book, and, if it succeeds in ever so slight a degree, its mission will not have been in vain.

GEORGE SPRAU.

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THE MEANING OF LITERATURE

THE MEANING OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

WHAT LITERATURE IS

"LITERATURE is the lasting expression in words of the meaning of life." As I quote these words from the pen of a distinguished American scholar and teacher, I am not unaware of their shortcomings as a definition. They are too vague and attempt to define by using terms which in themselves are incapable of definition. What, we may still ask, is the meaning of life, and how long must the expression in words wear to be lasting? But among the many other attempts to define literature in concise and appealing phrases none is more adequate, and few are freighted with like richness of suggestion.

Literature is art, and like all art it is so intimately associated with life that serious thinking about one always involves the other and renders final definition impossible. We cannot define life because it is infinite. We know of no beginning; we know of no end; and of the manifold elements that compose its essence about all we can say is, that we know a little of their nature but almost

nothing of their relations. It is, as it were, a word of innumerable letters, a few of which we have distinguished and named, but whose significance is bound up in relations and combinations that we have only begun to decipher. So while our definition may not in a strict sense define, it is rich in suggestion and may help us to a clearer understanding of the nature of the subject we have set before us for study.

In the first place our definition tells us that literature is a matter of words, an affair of language, and so ushers us at once into the realm of things human. Many of the lower animals have means of communication with one another, perhaps in all cases adequate to their respective needs; but to man alone is vouchsafed the gift of articulate language. By virtue of this gift more than by any other agency man has been able to grow and to develop those higher faculties of his being that forever separate him from the brute and bear assuring testimony to his kinship with the gods. Language is the instrument of thought, the inspiration and accompaniment of emotion, the handmaid and symbols of imagination, the only means through which these highest forms of human experience may find adequate combined expression.

I have said that literature is art, and it may

be well at the outset to have in mind some clear notion of what art in general is in order that we may the more clearly understand the particular art of words. In the most general sense art is the concrete expression of human experience. Whenever a bit of experience — idea, emotion, or vision — becomes vivid enough to take on concrete form as word, deed, or action, art of some kind is bound to result. It may be the crudest manner of bodily movement, or the most graceful form of dance. It may be a heap of clay, or a Greek statue; the simplest kind of sentence, or a poem; the yell of a savage, or a symphony. In some way human experience has taken form and given to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. Fine art, the class to which literature belongs along with music, painting, sculpture, and the higher forms of dancing and landscape-gardening, is distinguished from crude art and craft in that it is the concrete expression of that quality of human experience which is characterized by the consciousness of pleasure and beauty. Fine art is always an end in itself, and in its form and substance betrays the ecstasy of love and reverence through which it came into being.

For illustration let us take examples of art in the broad sense but near enough to the dividing-line of crude art and fine art to make the differ-

ence more evident. If we imagine ourselves riding along the country road through a well-developed nursery farm, what do we see? Fields more or less regularly laid out and planted with flowers, shrubs, and trees. And what is the nature of experience that marks our beholding? Pleasure? Perhaps. Beauty? Perhaps, too, in part. But the pleasure and the beauty in so far as they are combined in experience are associated with the material before us and not with its arrangement. Flowers, shrubs, and trees, in themselves are beautiful and give pleasure without the aid of man. The pleasure and beauty that accompany our beholding are in no sense the result of anything man has done or even of anything he has experienced. In fact what he has done often detracts from our joy in that he has made ugly by arrangement what is inherently beautiful.

Now, if we make a more detailed study of what is before us and inquire into the motives that governed the selection and distribution of material, we shall find profit the sole moving force. So far as the nursery is concerned flowers and shrubs are not ends in themselves; neither are pleasure and beauty the ends sought through love and reverence. The nursery must pay, and to this end material is massed according to adapta-

bility of soil and economy of space without considering whether such arrangement may or may not inspire pleasure combined with the experience of the beautiful.

Farther along the same road we come to a well-kept homestead. Here we find again the same material, flowers and shrubs from the nursery just passed; but how different is the effect! The natural beauty of substance has been intensified by arrangement, and pleasure is increased. Here the end sought was not profit, but beauty and joy, and the finished work itself gives evidence of the love and devotion through which alone it could be given form.

In the same way we might illustrate from other fields of art. The dancing of a Pavlowa and the singing of a Caruso differ from the crude jigging of some clumsy yokel or the Easter solo of a village prima donna by the long hours or even years of patient devoted study and practice through which they have perfected their manner of expression. Every movement of the body, every tone of voice gives evidence of an ideal that beckoned, of an inner joy that lighted the soul, of a restless impulse urging the spirit to a realization of this ideal in some manner of concrete form that it might become the eternal possession of mankind. No doubt the yokel and the occasional

soloist have some pleasure in their performances, but their joy is not the moving rapture of fine art. Either they are trying to imitate what they have seen others do, or their behavior is prompted by the blind forces of nature working through them. They have no ideal that ever glows before them, no burning desire to give that ideal complete and permanent expression. Such work moves us only slightly, if at all. In the realm of spirit deep calls unto deep. The tides of the great ocean pile themselves up in narrow bays and inlets, and the deep ocean waves moan and fret with ceaseless agitation along the shallow beaches, but the returning tide and the noisy undertow madly rushing out to sea only slightly ripple the surface of its water or lose themselves in perfect calm.

With books the same truths hold good. Words, like flowers and motion and song, are the common possession of all men and may be made to serve their manifold purposes. With the same words we shape our curses and our prayers, trade in the market-place or write love-songs. But words are inherently less significant than flowers or movements or tones, and acquire more of their meaning from setting and arrangement. Words both denote and connote. Language becomes artistic only when it takes on a richness and ful-

ness of connotation that is wholly out of place in common parlance. To be sure, figurative expression is common enough in every-day speech, but for the most part such figures have lost their freshness of connotation and become hackneyed in their literalness. A new setting is necessary to give them life and meaning. It is, then, by virtue of the arrangement of words that language becomes fine art, and that one book is literature and another is not.

The lasting expression in words, then, that differentiates literature from what is not literature is a matter of arrangement whereby the connotative value of words is greatly increased and their power to move strengthened. This subtle arrangement of words by virtue of which a piece of composition becomes literature we speak of technically as style. In his essay on "The Writing of Essays," Alexander Smith says: "In literature the charm of style is indefinable, yet all-subduing; just as fine manners are in social life. In reality it is not of so much consequence what you say, as how you say it. Memorable sentences are memorable on account of some single irradiating word."

This peculiar effect of style in writing becomes very evident if we take a selection of indisputable literary merit and rearrange the words so

that the literal sense may remain as nearly as possible unchanged. Suddenly the charm is gone. In the strict logical sense the words have the same meaning, but somehow they do not have the same value. Their connotation was lost somewhere in the shuffling, and while they have the same capacity they no longer have the same carrying power.

For illustration let us take the opening lines of the nineteenth psalm:

> "The heavens declare the glory of God,
> And the firmament showeth His handiwork;
> Day unto day uttereth speech,
> And night unto night revealeth knowledge;
> There is no speech, there are no words,
> Neither is their voice heard.
> Their line is gone out through all the earth,
> And their words to the end of the world."

Now, if we juggle with the words here used and leave them in the following order, what is the effect?

> "The firmament showeth the handiwork of God,
> And the heavens declare His glory;
> Revealeth knowledge night unto night,
> And uttereth speech day unto day;
> No words are there, no speech is there,
> Neither is heard their voice.
> Through all the earth is their line gone out,
> And to the end of the world their words."

It would be difficult to say just what has happened. The bare idea or conception, in so far as there can be an idea or conception apart from language, remains the same. The beauty of rhythm in the original is lacking in the rearrangement, and the words have lost much of their richness of tone color through shifting. But more than this has taken place, and we cannot formally fix the cause. The original is controlled by a vivid ideal that inspired love and reverence. Devotion to that ideal forever fixed the form and manner of expression through which it becomes a reality to whomsoever may read. In the rearrangement the sole purpose was to express the substance of the idea with no thought for the manner of expression except that it should differ from the original. It need hardly be said that one is not likely to be deeply moved by such a purpose nor to be much concerned about the result of one's effort. No wonder, then, that the work does not touch us vitally, since it was not vital enough in the experience of him through whom it was born to elicit the care and joy in expression that constitute the distinguishing mark of fine art.

A few more illustrations may not be out of place in order that we may see clearly how the arrangement of words determines the quality of style that is quintessential to literature. If in the

well-known line from Keats, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," we shift the last two words, making it read as follows, "A thing of beauty for ever is a joy," the line loses something. The sense remains the same, but something is lost from the meaning, and with that something lost has gone what gives the line its literary value. If we take the liberty of substituting another word identical in meaning, "A thing of beauty is an everlasting joy," again the subtle quality we seek eludes us. Indeed we are told somewhere that Keats experimented much after this manner until he finally shaped this line in its present form of truth and beauty.

Tennyson, too, the supreme artist among the English poets of the nineteenth century, gives abundant evidence of the constant diligence with which he sought the right arrangement of words for the highest literary effect. One case, I think, will serve to illustrate our point. In 1831 he published in *The Gem, A Literary Annual*, the following poem:

"O sad No More! O sweet No More!
O strange No More!
By a mossed brook bank on a stone
I smelt a wild weed flower alone;
There was a ringing in my ears,
And both my eyes gushed out with tears;

Surely all pleasant things had gone before,
Low-buried fathom deep beneath with thee,
No More!"

Somewhere I have read that a crude version of this same thing was recorded in his note-book as early as 1827. While it would be hazardous indeed to say that the version above has no literary merit, we may safely assert that it has no literary merit of very high degree. But turn now to the same song finally perfected and printed in "The Princess," 1847.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd

> On lips that are for others; deep as love,
> Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
> O Death in Life, the days that are no more!"

If a lyric be the expression of a single mood, it requires no very shrewd critical judgment to recognize the identity of mood expressed in these two poems, and a concise logical statement of the sense of the one would surely fit the other as well. But what has happened during the long intervening years to raise what is scarcely a thing of literary merit to the highest perfection of lyric art? The poet has rearranged and redistributed his chief carrying words — no more, sweet, sad, strange, tears — and he has bound them together with a connective tissue of rich, vivid, visual and auditory imagery. He has used more words and has strung them together more closely. The net is, as it were, more closely woven, and less of the meaning strains through and escapes. The labor necessary for this achievement has been prompted and sustained by a single purpose, joy in the concrete accomplishment of beauty perfect as the ideal revealed it.

May I quote here from a contemporary poet who has expressed in an artistic manner what I have been trying to say in plain matter-of-fact language?

"I said: 'A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
Better go down upon your marrow bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world.'" *

Thus far we have been concerned with the arrangement of words within the sentence, the details of expression applicable to any kind of style. There are, however, other characteristics of arrangement of words that in literature are not so much matters of style as of form. In the first place, literature, like all other expression in language, may be either prose or verse. I use the term verse instead of poetry for the simple reason that all poetry is literature while verse, like prose, may or may not be. In common usage, to be sure, verse and poetry mean about the same thing, but in a more technical sense a piece of writing can hardly be called poetry unless it has those qualities of style which make it literature. Generally speaking, then, language, whether spoken or written, will always fall into the form of prose or verse and by virtue of this fundamental form will in a

* "Adam's Curse," William B. Yeats.

rudimentary way affect us whether the composition have the style of literature or not. So literature, like any other use of language, must be classified as prose or verse.

Literature has other peculiarities of form whose differences are easily discernible in the finished work but whose distinguishing qualities are not easy to define or explain. We seldom have any difficulty in deciding, to our own satisfaction at least, whether a book or some selection before us is prose or poetry — I use the term in the technical sense — but when asked to explain why it is the one or the other, we are often unable to do so to the satisfaction of others. Literary prose and poetry have in common the qualities that differentiate literature from what is not literature. Both are the lasting expression in words of the meaning of life. But each has something in addition that determines the difference in form while at the same time it seems to baffle and elude all attempts finally to seize upon it and give it a name. If we have a clear notion of what prose and poetry are, we are not seriously handicapped by the lack of final definitions, neither are we bothered very much in our study if we are unable to classify some pieces of literature as either the one or the other.

Literature has, then, two general forms, prose

and poetry, and each of these again is subject to special peculiarities of arrangement determined by the author's temperament and dictated by his attitude toward the subject-matter with which he is concerned. He may be interested in his experience primarily because it is his own, or because he recognizes in his own experience what is the common inheritance and destiny of all mankind. In either case he assumes a different point of view, and consequently his work bears distinguishing marks of form. According to whether the author assumes the former or the latter of these attitudes and points of view, we speak of his work as subjective or objective. The author may assume a changing attitude or shifting point of view, and then his work has both qualities simultaneously or in turn. Hence we have pieces of literature that are composite in form or even miscellaneous.

In poetry we generally recognize three main types of form — epic, lyric, and dramatic — in which poetic material is moulded. To be sure, these types are not arbitrary nor mutually exclusive in every detail. They have some common qualities, and often we find poems that have some of the distinguishing features of at least two types. The iambic rhythm and the pentameter line characteristic of the English epic are also

common in the English poetical drama and in the English lyric. The long simile that we always expect to find in the epic is common enough in the lyric, especially in the sonnet. Then, too, we speak of a lyrical drama and of dramatic lyrics. In the main, however, the poet must assume one of three attitudes toward his experience: he may present it as his own; he may assume the rôle of narrator and tell it to us as something that has happened to mankind or groups of mankind; he may represent the experiences of others without in any way directly presenting himself.

Likewise, literary prose falls into one of three typical forms — the essay, the novel, and the drama. The attitudes of the prose-writer correspond to those of the poet, and poetry and prose have parallel forms of representation: for extreme subjectivity, the lyric and essay; for narrative, the epic and the novel; for purely objective, both have the drama.

There is indeed in each field what seems to be a separate type, the ballad and the short story, and often these are so treated. However, both are narrative and imply no attitude on the part of the author different from that of other narrative writing. But the mood is more lyrical in that it is more severely limited and isolated. Historical evidence indicates a close relationship

between the ballad and the epic, and between the short story and the novel; so they may with reasonable propriety be considered in connection with these general types.

Generally speaking, then, the lasting expression in words that differentiates literature from what is not literature is a matter of arrangement and may be broadly stated as follows: first, style, that is concerned with the arrangement of words within the sentence and of sentences among themselves, inspired by the author's reverence for his subject-matter and controlled by his devotion to the ideal of beauty through which the notion or conception came to life; second, form, the arrangement of words in prose or poetry as the nature of experience may require for complete expression; and third, type, the manner of form that the attitude of the author toward his subject-matter may dictate — in prose, essay, novel, drama — and in poetry, lyric, epic, drama.

I think it is safe to say that whatever is literature in the sense of fine art must satisfy these requirements of expression. Even what might seem to be apparent exceptions, some works of history, biography, and science, if they rise very high in literary quality, are marked by the features of arrangement considered above. Style alone is sufficient to give literary quality to a

piece of writing of almost any nature no matter what the form or type may be. But style alone cannot be dissociated from medium and manner of expression, and in literature the idea — thought, feeling, or imagery — is always so intimately interwoven in the network of language that no mere juggling with words can give nobility of meaning to what is ignoble by nature in experience. What is ugly or debasing in life cannot be rendered beautiful or uplifting by any choice and arrangement of words. Indeed the trick may be subtle, and we may be surprised and wonder at it; but unless the artist has been deeply moved by the beauty of his ideal, and for the moment, at least, exalted by the influence of its presence, his juggling will seem but trickery, and his efforts will have been spent in vain.

We come now to the second part of our definition, and with justice we may ask, what is "the meaning of life" whose lasting expression in words is literature? A moment's reflection, I am sure, will tell us that here as in the use of language we are dealing with things human. Literature is concerned with the life of man, with what he thinks, with what he feels, with his visions and dreams. Life in general or the absolute life is not material for literary art except as the life of men reaches downward into the common or upward toward the godlike and sublime.

If the evolutionist philosophers are at all on the right road to truth, life must be a kind of growth, or, at any rate, it manifests itself as what might seem to be stages of development. In this series of stages the latest growth is always most alive. The plant grows from a seed and is always most sensitive in the tip, the bud, and when the flower and seed have once been formed, the stalk may die. The seed alone can support the life that produced it. So in animal life, the meaning of existence is found in the functioning of the newest and latest additions to the organism as a whole. The first functioning eye gave to its possessor a new world and so a new life the like of which had not been before. The same may be said of the ear. How great must this new life have been with the coming of consciousness and then of self-consciousness! Each addition gave to life a new meaning commensurate with what was superadded to the old.

Man, then, is man by virtue of what in him is superadded to the brute. Not what we have in common with the beast, but what we have in difference gives us the quality of life we know as human. In our animal nature we must have and do all the things that other animals have and do, and in a sense we must be what other animals are, except as our higher nature always colors and often controls our whole being. Thus man's

body must be fed and cared for; it is subject to healthful vigor, to pain, disease, and death. So it becomes necessary to satisfy the demands of his animal nature. He must provide for himself food and shelter, and he must take some thought for his state of health. These things are necessary but they are not therefore in themselves important. If one has provided abundantly for all these needs, one cannot be said to be living in the sense of what we mean by human life. More and more we endeavor to shift this necessary drudgery out of the field of consciousness in order that we may be free for the conscious exercise of those powers in whose proper functioning lies the whole meaning of life. Wherever machinery can be used to supply food and shelter we are willing to have them so provided, and the more automatic the machinery the more acceptable is its service. Even where this is not possible we try to reduce work of like nature to the realm of the reflex, that conscious attention to what we are doing may be reduced to a minimum, and freedom to attend to other higher orders of experience thereby extended. Man's nature shrivels if he must keep his mind on the work whose sole reward is food and shelter. Even health seems hardly worth having, if we can have it only at the price of constant care.

So it is that human life presents a peculiar spectacle, various and complex. The common laborer, yes even the slave, digs with his pick and shovel, but while he digs he sings or whistles. Often he talks to himself or to such companions as his crude imagination is capable of creating, and the smile or scowl that plays upon his face betrays how far the meaning of his life is removed from his daily toil. A Scotch ploughboy by the name of Burns follows his plough round after round, hardly aware of what his arms and legs are doing, while through his soul are being born the immortal lines to a daisy and a mouse. A clerk in the India House sits at his desk day after day doing sums and making entries in his ledger, but the light on his countenance speaks not of figures but of Dream Children, Old China, Popular Fallacies, and Chimney-Sweeps. In our own time a youth by the name of Masefield rolls and unrolls carpet in a New York shop, but his spirit is with Chaucer and the nine and twenty on that memorable pilgrimage. Well does the shepherd boy in Browning's "Saul" sum up the whole philosophy of human existence when he says:

"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show

Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall
know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage
that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for."

There can be no doubt that in the experience of these lines we have the essence of life that is peculiarly human. No matter how much of our being we have in common with the brute creation the vital meaning of these lines is not within the circle of common inheritance. Whatever faculties we may discover in animals or attribute to them through plausible inferences, it is evident enough that they have no imagination in the artistic sense of the term and so no experience of the ideal or the beautiful. Even if we must attribute to them the lower forms of thought, perhaps even rudimentary reason, certainly they have no notion of purpose or value in their thought, because they lack the ideal standards by which alone we are able to estimate the value of judgment. Finally, animals do not have the higher order of feeling commonly spoken of as emotions. Imagination, discriminating thought, and emotion, these phases of experience in man together with self-consciousness have been superadded to the brute, and in them man finds the richer meanings of his existence.

The meaning of life whose lasting expression in words constitutes literature cannot be found in man's lower or animal nature. About the primary functions of brute life, feeding and reproduction, nothing need be said. It is too evident that anything worthy as literary art cannot be made out of these elements of experience. To be sure, Kilmer may write for us a bit of verse on the Delicatessen Shop, and Whitman may chronicle the details of his begetting, but these and like attempts have hardly succeeded in achieving what is worthy of the name of literature. Even the higher order of animal experience, sight and hearing, as pure sensation is not of the nature of art. Not what we see, but what we see in things gives them a meaning. "The light that never was on land or sea," and "The piping to the inner ear ditties of no tone" — such is the nature of human sight and human hearing, and only as it is of this quality does it have for man a real meaning. Only as the world about us flashes upon the inner eye and the inner ear does life take on its true joy that is the bliss of solitude.

To be sure, human experience is both very complex and very complicated, so that if we are not carefully on guard, we are likely to speak, or even to think, in ways that are dangerously misleading. The older psychologists were wont to speak

of the faculties of the mind or soul in such a manner that we might easily be led to think of the mind as a series of compartments each functioning as an end unto itself and independently of the others. They divided the mind into intellect, sensibility, and will, and considered its functioning respectively as knowledge, feeling, and volition. Whatever their purpose in this classification may have been, it was easy to get the notion that these faculties and functionings are separate and independent, that knowledge is an experience apart from feeling, and that will functions regardless of the other two.

But more and more we are coming to think of human experience as a matter of consciousness, even of self-consciousness, the interplaying of all forces that come together in the making of life. Consciousness is an affair of immediacy. We speak of it as a stream, but it is more truly the cross-section of a stream. We live from moment to moment, and each instant is a complex of all the forces at play in man. Seeing and hearing, muscular weariness, pain, love, hatred, judgment, memory, hope, desire, vision — all together flash instantly into consciousness, and as experience have no existence apart from it. But in this cross-section, this instantaneous experience, all points are not equally vivid. There is always a centre

of attention, as it were a nucleus of life, about which the whole is massed and blended.

The soul experiences all things, because in their sum total we find its final definition; and so whatever goes on in man, even the simplest form of muscular sensation or movement, in some way enters into experience and modifies the consciousness of the moment. Seeing modifies hearing, and love waits upon digestion; sorrow is mingled with joy, and ignorance walks hand in hand with knowledge. But the meaning of life shifts always with the centre of attention, the nucleus of momentary consciousness, and is richest when this centre of attention finds itself among those elements of consciousness that are peculiarly man's own. So Shelley defines poetry as "The record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." He goes on to say: "We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond expression; so that even in the desire and the regret they leave there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is, as it were, the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are

like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibilities and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire." *

Life is not everywhere and always the same. There are moments when it is pale and patternless, thin as air, and marked only by the dull thud of monotony that registers the slow passing of time. There are moments gorgeous in color, of varied and intricate patterns, moments when the eye beholds in glory and the ear throbs in rhythm with the harmony of sweet sound; thought crowds upon thought, and burning passion lights the way to truth; imagination fashions all in forms of beauty, and in the swift suggestion of an hour finds the revelation of eternal law, the safe and sure way to God. Such moments are moments of love, of vision, of faith; moments when the consciousness of man opens to receive the consciousness of God and knows even as it is known.

> "A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
> And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again,
> The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,

* "Defense of Poetry."

And what we mean, we say, and what we would we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmurs, and sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.
And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth forever chase
The flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes." *

Between the ebb and flood tides of life are all degrees and stages of depth and motion. The varying intensity of thought and feeling, the breadth or narrowness in range of vision, the rectitude and accuracy with which imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, furnish material for different qualities of literature. It may be only a playful fancy, a bit of light humor, a momentary joy or sorrow; or it may be a psalm, an epic, or the sermon of a prophet; but somehow it must touch life in such a way as to be of significance, and only as it is related to that in life which changeth not, is it worthy of the devotion through which alone it can be given the lasting expression in words that makes it literature.

* "The Buried Life," Matthew Arnold.

CHAPTER II

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Words, like all other things in this world, have a history. Some time, somehow, they came into existence and were made to serve a purpose in life, and in serving that purpose many things have happened to them. Often they have been made to serve many different purposes at the same time; often they have been forced to undergo radical changes both in their nature and in the uses to which we put them. We are concerned here with two such words because the nature of the task before us demands that we make a sharp distinction between them and clearly differentiate the mental process represented by the one from that represented by the other. The words are *reading* and *study*. If we turn to any good dictionary (Webster's International is the one nearest at hand) we find both terms explained by a long series of definitions that indicate the variety of uses to which we have put them. In some instances we find their meanings overlap, and we must conclude that it is permissible and by no means uncommon to use the words synony-

mously. This discovery only adds to the necessity of a clear understanding of the sense in which we are to use them in this chapter.

Reading, we are told, originally meant to advise, to counsel, to guess, and was used in connection with riddles and runes. This use included interpretation, or the explanation of signs as a revelation of fate. The original use in the sense of advising and guessing, we are told, is obsolete; but on second thought I am sure we shall find that guessing still plays a large part in what we ordinarily mean by reading; that is, apprehending the meaning of certain combinations of characters before us. And this is the sense in which I wish to use the word here: "To go over, especially with apprehension of the meaning of, as characters or words, with or without utterance aloud or inaudible recitation to one's self." This, no doubt, is what we ordinarily mean by reading: taking up a bit of written or printed matter and apprehending the meaning of the combinations of characters before us; and guessing, you will agree, is by no means wholly foreign to the process. With many people guessing still constitutes the major part of the experience they call reading.

On the other hand, study is something quite different from mere reading; but since both are often a part of the same experience, we naturally

associate the words together and at times even use them indiscriminately to designate the same state of mind. The primary definition of study is "A setting of the mind or thought upon a subject to be learned or investigated." And then again: "Considered endeavor toward some object; earnest and reasoned effort." While guessing may and often does enter into what we call reading, the aim of study is in so far as is possible to eliminate guessing from our mental process and to direct what goes on in our minds toward some specific end, even if this must be done by conscious effort. Study, then, differs from reading in that it is mental effort directed toward some definite end or purpose, while reading is concerned only with the apprehension and interpretation of words and characters on the page before us.

As applied to literature, I believe we are more likely to confuse these terms than we are in connection with almost any other subject. We are told so often that literature is to be enjoyed, to be read for pleasure, and that whatever disturbs this joy and pleasure, interferes with appreciation and breaks up the artistic experience. The champions of this notion tell us that it is better to guess at the meaning of strange words in a poem, and even at times to mispronounce them when reading aloud, than to disturb the joy and

pleasure of the experience by referring to the dictionary. If the words suggest a meaning to you, what can it matter if this meaning is not what the author had in mind? Letting the soul have adventures in the presence of masterpieces may be very well, if you have the right kind of soul; but we know well enough that what was in the author's mind is likely to be better for us when rightly comprehended than what comes into our consciousness miscellaneously from guessing at his meaning, unless we have a higher type of mind, more thoughtful, more sensitive, better informed, of wider and more penetrating imagination than has the author. Generally speaking this is not the case, and disturbing a joyous state of mind for a bit of information or for mental effort of any kind in order that we may bring on a state of greater joy and pleasure surely is legitimate at all times.

In the modern world at least literature is largely a matter of books and reading. In more ancient times, no doubt, it was primarily a spoken art, communication from lip to ear, and so of necessity dealt with such phases of experience as could be adequately embodied in the style of spoken discourse. Primitive literature for the most part consists of instant improvisation or of reciting what the auditors already knew by heart. Familiarity

with the subject-matter was always assumed, and the simple, direct style through which it found expression was always accompanied by some form of histrionic interpretation. The reciter — scop, bard, or minstrel — accompanied his words with facial movements, intonations of the voice, and gesture that aided the listeners in their apprehension of his meaning and in their response to it.

But with the invention of writing, and especially with the invention of printing, a new medium of communication was developed, a linguistic style from which the composer physically is absent, and through which he might attempt the expression of far more difficult and complicated phases of experience. The modern writer has at his command a large vocabulary, and he has developed the common forms of poetry and prose into highly specialized types that in themselves become media of expression. Furthermore, modern life is more comprehensive and complex than primitive life, and so presents a wider range of meaning as subject-matter for literature. Vicarious experience enters into our living to-day to a much greater extent than ever before. Life is more highly specialized and so individually more isolated than in primitive times when the tribe and the individual were more homogeneous.

So we have many points of view from which

to look at life, many planes on which to live it, many languages even in our own vernacular with which to talk about it and write about it. Before the days of writing and reading, experience faded with memory, and only what was constant and universal could ever be revived and lived over again. To be sure, men's work lived after them in wood, in clay, in stone, but these, too, are perishable and in time speak not. But even if they might last as the pyramids, they tell only a little of what men did, nothing of what life meant in the doing. The meaning of life is best expressed in words, and only as it became possible to treasure language and preserve it, could we learn the true meaning of existence. Language came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. This abundant life is possible only through vicarious experience, and literature is the most potent agency by which vicarious experience is brought about.

Through literature the wider range of experience of the race is brought home to us. In novel, essay, and song we may see with the seer's vision, think the sage's thoughts, feel with the intensity of passion that moved the finest spirits ever clothed in human form. But, like all that is noble in life, the treasures of literature are not given without care and sacrifice. If we are in any way ambitious

to share the experiences of great minds, think their thoughts, be moved by their emotions, see with their range of vision, we must live as they. And this means strong persistent effort. The *n*th power of experience can be approximated only through a process of involution that enlarges as it advances. If I am to enlarge my experience not only by incorporating the best that goes on in the greatest minds of my own age but of all ages as well, I cannot loaf in easy indifference or dream on the couch of the slothful. Growth is a struggle not free of pain but ever accompanied by joy. If literature ever means to us what it should, it gets that meaning through the constant urge of soul upward, through the ever-widening expanse of vision, the accumulating wealth of ideas that we feel and know we may have and possess if we will. Mere reading cannot do this for most of us, and for none of us can it do this in the fullest sense. Study is the only way by which we can furnish the mind with the kind of experience that constitutes the keenest pleasure of literary appreciation.

While the ultimate aim of all literary study is to widen the scope of consciousness, to give latitude to the play of mind with mind and so intensify living, within this larger goal we may set for ourselves many more immediate objectives.

In the first place, literature is a revealer of human nature. Here more than anywhere else the soul of man lies open before us. In lyric and essay men tell us how they have felt and thought in their moments of strength and weakness. They give us, as it were, their varying moods and make it possible for us to live through the whole gamut of human experience. In the more objective types of epic, novel, and drama we have life depicted both realistically and idealistically. Plot, which in the ordinary occurrences of actual affairs and in history is only ambiguously suggested and fragmentarily presented, in these more elaborate types of literature is worked out clearly in detail and represented in completeness. Observation and history show us only the deeds of men and repeat their spoken words, but it is the privilege of the imaginative artist to admit us into the holy of holies of human nature, where its most secret passions, its motives and ambitions lie clearly revealed. His subtle key unlocks for us not only the criminal's cell but even the murderer's heart. Emperors and kings admit us to their most secret councils; statesmen meditate in our presence; saints and lovers accept our company and share with us the joy and anguish of their hours of loneliness. Through the study of literature we may extend our acquaintance with

human nature by sharing vicariously those vital experiences that men set store by, the meaning of life that is vibrant with thought and imagination, intensified by passion, made lasting through beautiful expression in words.

Having cultivated the habit of thoughtful, systematic reading, the student of literature may set out in quest of race ideals. For most of us life is comparatively short, and the thoughtful man or woman is often perplexed to know what is most worth while in our sojourn here. The more highly specialized living becomes the more we are impressed with the wide range of human interests that differentiate us as individuals, and there is an ever-increasing tendency to lay stress on the varying elements of experience and to accept a relativistic philosophy as the chief foundation of whatever attitude toward life we may assume. More and more we are coming to think of success in terms of immediate achievement, and from day to day we shift our interest and attention toward a variety of unrelated objectives. The great need of modern life is a steadying influence to unify our interests and to direct our efforts toward some final goal. Living is too much a hand-to-mouth affair. Our gettings and becomings are sorely in need of a singleness of purpose, an all-pervading motive and ideal.

Here literature, more than anything else, comes to our aid, for it is the most complete embodiment of what is constant in the ideals that have moved our race. In language the noblest of our fathers have given beautiful expression to what meant most to them. We hear their voices sound across the ages, and their songs and wisdom ever give assurance of the truth that cannot alter and of a sure way to peace. Only as we school ourselves to share the life lived by the greatest of our fathers, to think their thoughts, feel their passions, see with their range and intensity of vision, can we be said truly to have entered into the full possession of our rightful inheritance.

From the national point of view, also, literature is a profitable subject for study. Often, to be sure, race and national boundaries coincide, and any study of one must of necessity include the other. But, on the other hand, there are many different nations that are racially offshoots from the same stock, as the English, German, and Scandinavian. Their languages are cognate, and much of elemental life they have in common. As children of the same family often are scattered to various sections of the country or even to foreign lands and in time show marked differences in what their later years have brought them, so these nations have modified their common in-

heritance through the stimulus and appeal of differing environmental influences. The comparative study of national literatures in the same or different languages helps us to understand the constant and varying factors at play in the active centres of life as it takes on meaning among them. Even with nations so closely allied as England and America an appreciative understanding of their literatures must ever be accompanied by a finer sympathy with what is noble in the ideal aspirations of both. When the relationship of nations is more remote and the bond of union less intimate, the study of their literatures is bound to reveal whatever mutual indebtedness may exist among them, and to open a way at least of enlarging the realm of experience by a cheerful tolerance of such varieties of meaning in life as would otherwise have been denied.

Even within the nation there is no form of expression that more accurately and completely chronicles the meaning of national life than its literature. Literature accompanies the life of a nation in much the same way as it does the lives of individuals. Historians rely on it as a trustworthy index of temperament and attitude, often having no other data from which to draw their inferences and upon which they may found their generalizations. Literature reflects the tastes and

ideals of different periods in a nation's life. Often these periods are as moods in the lives of individuals, and we must understand them if we would in any way comprehend the life of the nation as a whole. One cannot have a clear understanding of American life without a knowledge of Puritan thought and sentiment. One can hardly be said to know the Englishmen, if one is ignorant of the mighty heart that vitalized the age of Elizabeth. And what is the value of one's acquaintance with Hebrew ideals and Hebrew imagination if one has not read the prophets? In the literature of an age or period the people have recorded what to them was worthy of note, and from its pages alone can we reap the harvest they have sown.

This kind of study suggests another, the development of literary form. In English literature, why should the poetic drama belong so especially to the age of Shakespeare, and prose fiction to the nineteenth century? What does the highly formalized rhymed couplet of the age of Pope tell us about English life of the period? The form in which an age chooses to express itself is always significant in that it reveals the many-sidedness of life and testifies to the versatility of human genius that varies the mould to suit the exact meaning of its mood and temper. Even so constant a type as the lyric when considered histori-

cally shows a wide range of variation both in form and subject-matter. The songs of the days of Shakespeare or of Pope sound different notes from what one hears in the lyrics of the early or late nineteenth century. And this difference of tone speaks of a different shade of meaning life was manifesting as the years passed into the centuries. To trace these developing forms and comprehend the significance of their many variations is a worthy end of study in the field of literature.

The archæologist, too, recognizes in literature a fertile area for research. Language is older than history and more enduring than the materials commonly used by men to embody the expression of their ideas. Literature points the way back almost to the beginning of human existence. The first joy or sorrow felt and known as such was registered by some sort of cry that in time became a word or the root of a word that still plays much the same part in our language experience. How often when we would fully fathom the depth of meaning in some verse of poetry or line of prose do we light upon words whose subtle connotation leads us back until the trail is lost among the dark shadows of antiquity! The strain of an old love-song or prayer coming to us from some remote time dumb almost to history often awakens in us a kindred response uncanny in its spiritual

identity. Something haunts us as it were the ghosts of our dead selves. If the historical study of literature accentuates the varying moods and meanings of life, the archæological study finds in it an element of experience whose meaning changeth not.

Furthermore, literature may be studied as a kind of spiritual autobiography. History and biography, for the most part, are concerned with the outer occurrences in the lives of men, as it were their social behavior. But the study of literature may take us into the innermost life of the author's soul. Here he has recorded for us the spiritual values of experience in the loneliest moments of being. Literature tells us what a sunrise meant to him, and how in the wind whispering among the trees at midnight he caught the faintest echoes of God's voice speaking through eternity. Through lyric and essay it is our privilege to enter the private thinking chambers of the author's mind. We know the problems that puzzled him, and how he attempted to solve them. Often in his most difficult struggles we recognize our own, and in his victories and defeats, we do at times discern the shadowy outline of some path to peace. When we consider his whole literary output from youth to old age, the panorama of his life lies all before us. We see the soul at play

with fortune, and out of the myriad instances of the moment we behold it fashioning for itself a universe of order, a home of ideal beauty. Through this intimate penetration of the meaning of life revealed in the literary work of noble men and women we are often led to a readjustment of values, to a subtle transformation of the ideal world possible only through the creative inspiration of high thinking and refined artistic emotion.

Finally, in the study of literature we may centre our attention on style. While the choice and arrangement of words are ever working their charm upon us as we read, yet we are not always aware how much our pleasure in this or that book or author is the direct result of mere style. How much of the difference in charm between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, Tennyson and Browning, Longfellow and Emerson, Masefield and Noyes, Max Beerbohm and E. V. Lucas, is clearly the effect of discriminating diction and cleverness of phrase! Even where such contemporaries have thought and felt the same, and where they have used the same general types of literary form, their finished products affect us differently because they do not use the same words or, if they do, they give these words a different connotation by some trick of novel phras-

ing. The monotony of Pope is due not so much to narrowness of vision or singleness of idea as to continuous repetition of the closed couplet. The rhymed couplets of Keats are seldom monotonous even when he has a greater dearth of ideas than is common to the mind of Pope.

How much, too, of the effect of an author's work is due to a wise choice in the type of literature he selects for his medium of expression! Just the other day a young woman asked if it were at all possible to put "Silas Marner" in the form of drama. Questions like this compel a close scrutiny of the larger elements of style. To turn the novel into a play much would have to go, and among the discarded matter would be the author's many observations on life, her many comments on the characters and events as they unfold before us, hints here and there as to how we are to interpret what is going on. Even a Greek chorus would be inadequate for the rôle George Eliot reserves for herself in this novel, and without this part "Silas Marner" would not be itself. Certainly our joy in reading may be greatly increased by a painstaking study of style, and often indeed we cannot be assured of full comprehension and worthy appreciation without the mastery of style that alone renders complete reading possible.

But all of these aims in the study of literature

presuppose the ability to read and appreciate literature as art. Reading a lyric or a novel is not the same as reading the news column or the sporting page of the daily paper. To be sure, most of us derive a kind of pleasure from the latter kind of reading, but it is not the kind of pleasure we derive from fine art. We are careless about such matters. We like to read about them, but we read about them without effort, and we seldom care to remember what we read. Such reading never raises us to the realm of experience where life has an abiding charm and where thought and feeling become worth while. Likewise the reading of a drama or an essay differs from the reading of a bit of history or a scientific treatise. These bring information and stimulate thought, but only rarely does such reading matter arouse the higher emotions or release the imagination to play at will with truth and beauty. Literature as fine art has a technic of its own, and if we would read it with full understanding we must make ourselves masters of the technicalities of its different forms and types.

There is, then, an elementary course of study fundamental and necessary if we would qualify ourselves in any way to seek truth or enrich life through the study of literature. We must learn to read what the literary artists have given us

and to interpret the meaning of life as they have experienced it in their best moments. To do this we must open our minds to their influence, tune our sensibilities to their pitch, sustain the burden of their thought, the intensity of their feeling and imagination. In other words, we must become intimately familiar with their books; we must feel at home in the atmosphere of letters. It is not enough for the student of literature that he can use books; he must love them, and in his reading manifest that alertness of mind which sympathizes readily with the finer suggestions of language. Thinking must be agreeable and knowledge never a burden. The student must be able to grasp truth imaginatively and to respond to beauty in whatever form presented. Only when we do this can we say rightly that we are studying literature.

It is with a view toward helping in this elementary study that this book is written. Too often we find students setting themselves to work at remote and difficult problems in the study of literature before they have mastered the rudiments of the art. Criticism to-day is flooded with books and articles, dissertations and treatises, often betraying on the part of the writer a total lack of ability to share even the lower stages of artistic literary experience. And the style of much of this work bears witness to the fact that criticism with

such writers is a business and not an art. Our schools, also, are burdened with a ballast of pedagogical Esaus who daily sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. The hungry sheep look up, indeed, and are not fed. In place of the bread of literature, children are given the chaff and straw that the wind bloweth where it listeth, and for study, the calling into play of the highest activities of the soul, they have substituted reading for enjoyment, which often means no more than being amused by vaudeville stunts or entertained by the thrills of the neuropathic sentimentalist. Developing whatever taste for literature may be native to the young mind and cultivating an intelligent appreciation of good books are ever worthy aims of literary study, but the methods too often pursued render success in these directions forever impossible.

The first step in the study of literature is mastery of form. Form is used here in the broad sense of technic, including both words and the patterns according to which the words are arranged. As soon as the reader begins to study he becomes a critic, and as a critic he must fully understand all of the formal elements of his art in order that he may comprehend the meaning it symbolizes. The critic and the creative artist have much in common, and in this lies concealed the secret of their

success. The creative artist succeeds by virtue of his critical power that guides him in the choice of substance and in the adaptation of this to that form which alone enables him to represent concretely the full idea that gave a meaning to the particular mood of his experience. The poet thinks in numbers because the numbers come, but it is the critic in the poet that selects the number pattern that is exactly adequate to sustain the burden of thinking that accompanies the mood of artistic creation. If the poet is not at the same time a critic, his work is bound to be crude and imperfect.

Likewise the critic, that is the student, must be able to enter into and share the experience of the poet if he would pass judgment on the poet's work. He must realize in himself the mood from which the poem was born and all the poem might have been and should have been, if he would tell us what this poem is with all of its virtues and faults. This the critic will be able to do only in proportion as he has mastered the form of expression in which the artist has moulded his ideas. The technicalities of the types of literature — essay, lyric, novel, drama, etc. — as well as of the simpler elements of style, such as diction, grammar, and rhythm, must be thoroughly familiar if one would comprehend what was in the mind of

the creative artist who moulded his experience in any of these types of linguistic expression. The incidents of plot, the asides of characters in the drama, the personal comments and reflections of the story-writer or novelist, the stanza and verse in a lyric, the figurative connotation of words — all perform some function in their respective types of expression and must be thoroughly mastered by any one who would understand their meaning.

Since literature is a language art and now most generally confined to books, the first step in the mastery of form is learning to read. In the modern civilized world almost every one has at least two languages. Even if one's command of speech is limited to one's mother tongue, yet one knows this and uses it as it is spoken and written. To be sure, we are accustomed to think of these as only different uses of the same language, but in reality they are so different in nature and appeal that they are more like two languages.

Spoken discourse is addressed to the ear and for the most part is concerned with the ordinary affairs and business of living. It always implies an audience, and the presence of an audience insures reliance upon supplementary aids to speech to clarify and enforce meaning. Modulation of the voice and gesture are invaluable aids to conversation or public address, and the simple fact that

two or more people always figure in the process of necessity limits the range of subject-matter and so of vocabulary to a comparatively narrow field. The things we talk about are for the most part such as are already familiar. Ideas about them come readily and lend themselves to easy extemporaneous expression. We seldom speak our best thoughts, perhaps because we do not think them while engaged in speaking. And our feelings or emotions, if revealed to our audience at all, are suggested by other means than the spoken words. Furthermore, spoken language is learned without much conscious effort on our part and so long ago that we do not remember how we acquired it. It seems elemental in our nature and in a large measure becomes reflex with no more meaning than walking.

On the other hand, written or printed discourse involved in reading serves a purpose in life quite different from talking. In the first place, it appeals to the eye and may or may not have an auditory accompaniment. It goes from mind to mind without supplementary aid or physical reinforcement. The writer works in isolation from the reader, and the ideas and moods he would express are in no sense affairs of mental partnership. Often the reader is not aware of what is going on in the writer's mind until long after the

writer has lost consciousness of what his words have recorded. Years and even centuries may separate them, and when they are contemporary, more often than not they have never seen each other. Frequently the reader is unable even to guess the sex of the one who has written for him, and if the writer knows anything at all about his readers, it is seldom more than this, that they will be men and women who have some degree of kinship with the kind of experience he is trying to relate. Words, printed characters, on the page are all they have between them, and from these alone to reinstate the writer's frame of mind is a task far different from sharing a common mood or mental attitude with one who talks to us face to face or with whom we engage in conversation.

Moreover, written style is quite different from spoken. It is less a matter of immediacy. We hear but a single word, or part of a word, at a time as it is spoken, but we read by groups of words, looking before and after, in rare cases limited in range only by the extent of the page. To be sure, memory and imagination come to the aid of the listener and give setting to the individual words as they fall from the speaker's lips, but memory and imagination figure also in the reading process and so give to spoken style no relative advantage in scope of comprehension.

Because of the large units of instantaneous impression written style must be more compact, more heavily loaded than spoken style. If we should write as we speak, our composition would seem thin and wearisome. Partly because of the larger units involved in reading, and partly because of weightier thought, writing invariably requires the use of a larger vocabulary. Every reader is well aware that he has two vocabularies, as it were two languages, and that his reading vocabulary is much larger than the number of words he uses in speaking. Unless he has vivid auditory imagery, many words in his reading vocabulary are familiar to sight alone; if he should hear the words spoken, he would hardly recognize them.

In writing, the sentence is longer and more complicated than in speaking, and the syntax is subtler and more difficult. Punctuation comes to our assistance here, but punctuation is an added element peculiar to written style, and still further differentiates it from the language of the tongue and ear. These distinguishing characteristics of written style are traceable and due to the more important subject-matter that goes into our writing. Writing is always a conscious process undertaken for a specific purpose. When one writes there is always something serious about which

one is concerned; a thought, a feeling, some ideal conception that has come into consciousness and somehow lighted up the momentary mood with lasting significance. Because we value the experience, we set it down that it may not be lost for ourselves or others.

The conditions under which we write are conducive to a high order of thinking. Removed from society the mind sinks back into itself and plays freely among the treasured lore that industry and talent have wrested from the passing years. Ideas come quickly in moods like this. Memory runs on uninterrupted, and imagination unobstructed sees patterns of ideal beauty and eternal truth. In such moments when the mind is clear and free to work we solve our problems, dream our dreams, systematize our philosophies. And when we take it on ourselves to write down the thought and feeling that have moved us deeply, the style in which we express ourselves will be orderly, systematic, and abundantly freighted with the rich and varied conceptions that throng the best moments of our lives. A finer quality of experience goes into our writing than supports our talking, and for its complete expression we make use of a different language, a larger vocabulary, a more complicated sentence, a subtler syntax to reflect more delicate shades of meaning.

While all written style differs from spoken, the style of literature differs more widely than any other kind of writing, because it is always concerned with a very extraordinary quality of human experience. Its chief purpose is not to instruct or inform, but to move through the ennobling pleasure that comes from calling into play the finer, more delicately adjusted, powers of the soul. Literature is always a complex of thought, feeling, and imagination, and it works its charm through suggestion rather than through direct specific communication.

Learning to read literature is a very special and at times a very difficult task. It means opening the soul and extending the range of mental activity that it may include the rich and unusual quality of experience everywhere suggested on the printed page. For the purpose of study we must select only such pieces of literature as are worthy, and sure to repay the effort and labor expended on them. The classics of any great literature are always suitable, but it may usually be of advantage to begin with the classics of one's own language and so avoid the added difficulties of a foreign tongue or the inaccuracies of translations. But even in the mother tongue we must begin our study dictionary in hand as we begin reading a strange language. We must master the literary vocabulary, learn the new words and the

significance of old words in their new setting. The connotation as well as the denotation of words must be consciously realized in order that our reading experience may be as rich and diversified as possible. Imagery of all kinds, especially visual and auditory, must be invoked, even at times with the expenditure of effort, to accompany the reading process. Thus only are we assured a full comprehension of the meaning of life represented by the written words.

In reading the style of science or philosophy, and in a measure of history, we need not be much concerned with the connotation of words. If we get the bare fact, the outline of the conceptions the words denote, we have all the writer intended for us, all that is necessary for his purpose. But in literature the color, the tone-quality of words, all they are capable of dragging into consciousness through association, must be reckoned with. For all such elements enter into the nature of experience and often determine its scope and intensity, its agreeableness or disagreeableness. Words inform us by what they definitely denote, they move us by their charm and power of connotation.

In this connection the student of literature must cultivate a feeling for right words and for the right placing of words. He must enlarge his

stock of synonyms in order that he may be aware of the special shades of meaning that none but the right words in the right places can express. He must attend strictly to the figurative use of words, especially where such use involves a shift from their ordinary meaning. Figurative language in general and tropes especially are the result of an alert, lively quality of intelligence copiously informed and quick to respond to suggestion. Consciousness is thronged with images and ideas so that it is easy to transfer words from their ordinary signification in accord with any of the laws of association. Contiguity, resemblance, contrast, cause and effect relationships are recognized only when many concepts and images appear in the mind together and make discovery possible. Figurative expression is the most effective means at the command of the literary artist to suggest to the reader the variety of imagery and association that trails his line of thought, and only in proportion as the reader definitely realizes the full significance of this use of words can he be said to reinstate the author's mood.

So it is well for the student to work out his figures of speech with due respect and care, for herein lies the crucial test of his ability to read. He must cultivate whatever power he has of bringing many things into mind, of extending the range of mo-

mentary consciousness, and of tracing lines of association among such imagery as he is capable of providing. Too often in our reading we are contented with a mere recognition of words, and all that goes on in our mental activity is a low tension feeling of familiarity and comfort in the presence of words we have seen before. Such reading, of course, cannot be called study, and never can be considered in connection with any undertaking that may be dignified with the title of study of literature.

Grammar is of no less importance than diction to the literary student. The sentence is the unit of thought, and the relation of words among themselves in the sentence must be accurately perceived before we can get at the meaning the author would express. The student-reader must sense the part every word plays in the sentence as it appears before him. Words must be understood in their relation to the phrases and clauses in which they appear, and through these to the sentence as a whole. Every element of the sentence — word, phrase, and clause — must be clearly conceived as the part of speech whose office it performs, and its syntactical form and function must be plainly discerned to insure thorough comprehension of meaning. Often sensing a word as the wrong part of speech, or assigning to a pro-

noun the improper antecedent, may lead the reader far astray from the true meaning. The importance of emphasizing diligent attention to such seemingly trivial matters of style cannot be overestimated, for difficulties of this nature are likely to appear on almost every page, increasing in frequency and importance as the author we attempt to read is remote from us in time. Who can even approximately come at the meaning of Shakespeare without thoroughly mastering the English grammar of his time and the special uses to which he put it?

Thus far we have been considering matters common to any and all kinds of literary style. What has been said about vocabulary, diction, and grammar applies with equal propriety to prose and verse. But there are other qualities of style peculiar to prose and poetry respectively, and with these, too, the student must be concerned before he can enter into full appreciation of the states and attitudes of mind that have made necessary the two forms of literary expression. It may not be possible finally to distinguish poetry and prose, or even in every instance to differentiate the one from the other. But there are outstanding characteristics more or less common to one or the other, never to both, and to these every careful reader must attend.

Language is primarily a spoken art and therefore an auditory experience. As a simple succession of sounds the flow of language varies in duration and intensity according to the meaning expressed, repeating itself in patterns of greater or less regularity. The likeness or identity of pattern and the degree of regularity that characterize this repetition give to language distinguishing qualities of rhythm. Rhythm may be fixed and absolute or shifting and relative.

The outstanding formal difference between prose and poetry is a difference of rhythm, prose being restricted to the relative and shifting type, while the rhythm of poetry may be fixed and absolute. Many critics have stoutly affirmed that verse and metre are not essential to poetry, but so far as I am aware no critic has ever maintained that prose may be cast in metrical forms. Literary prose is always rhythmical, rhythmical over a wide variety of pattern, but it may not be verse. As soon as the pattern absolutely and regularly repeats itself the composition ceases to be prose. Whether a bit of writing becomes poetry as soon as it takes on measured rhythm of verse may be left to the final decision of those who relish this kind of subject for debate. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that poetry may have verse and metre, whereas prose may not.

The earnest student of literature must develop a sensitiveness to rhythm, the rhythms of prose as well as the rhythms of poetry. Here, as in matters of vocabulary and grammar, it is rarely sufficient to trust to native spontaneity for complete and appropriate reaction. In the most literal sense rhythm is an affair of the ear, while reading is an affair of the eye. Many people have vivid auditory imagery that always accompanies their silent reading, and for them the difficulties are comparatively easy to overcome.

But many other would-be students of literature have little or no auditory imagery, and these must read silently with the eyes alone. For such readers rhythm frequently means no more than the regular grouping and repetition of such elements of language as can be graphically represented on the printed page. They distinguish poetry from prose solely by the length and distribution of lines and by the customary capital letter at the beginning of each line of poetry. And they differentiate poems among themselves according as they have rhyme or no rhyme, or as they are divided into stanzas of like or different structure or no stanzas at all. That pages of prose or poetry apparently alike should be so different in meaning, so far as rhythm is capable of expressing meaning, is foreign to their understanding until some one else

gives auditory interpretation to what they only see. Reading aloud is the only way such students have of overcoming the difficulties that lie in their way of mastering the element of rhythm in literary style, and even in this attempt they are beset with the tendency to impress their visual interpretation on their oral expression. Consciousness of the difficulties of rhythm and constant industry are the only conditions of reasonable success.

Prose and poetry have other distinguishing traits than rhythm. Prose is more like ordinary speech than is poetry, and so more logical and less elliptical. The order of words in prose is more direct and regular than in poetry; predication is more definite and complete, and inversion is less common. Prose style is primarily concerned with the clear adequate exposition of some line of thought with whatever emotional accompaniment is possible. Poetry, too, is concerned with thought, but less with its logical presentation and more with the expression of enthusiasm about some object, truth, or vision. Poetry often achieves its purpose by piling on image after image with a variety of rhythmical variations until enthusiasm is raised to the point of ecstasy and we almost forget what the excitement is about. Predication may be indefinite, or repeated

predications may even be contradictory if the emotional excitement is thereby increased. The poet cares little about how he jumps from one idea or image to another or about what gaps are left unbridged in his line of thought. It is enough for his purpose that logical sequence is possible, it need not be readily apparent. He works at white heat and often gives expression only to the sublimated essence of his experience. To apply the same canons of criticism to prose and poetry, or to try to interpret their meaning through a common understanding, is to fail utterly in comprehending the true nature of very different forms of expression.

The study of literature must include a mastery of types. The essay and the lyric differ from the novel and the poetical drama. They represent different transcripts of life, and each accomplishes its purpose by a very special and peculiar technic. The short story differs from the novel in other respects than length; the epic is something more than a series of narrative poems. Incident and character in the drama must be otherwise interpreted than incident and character in the novel. Each type is the expression of a temperament and a mood through which we have life presented and defined. The canvas may be large or small, the details many or few, but always the form is

adequate to the substance. Somehow truth as the author saw it shines through his scheme of words, and we must grasp the meaning of his symbols if we would search out the heart of his mystery.

By way of recapitulation we may state finally that the study of literature differs from just reading in that it is effort consciously directed, according to a well-arranged plan, toward some definite goal. The ends sought may be numerous and widely different, since so many human interests are represented in literature. The primary aim and that upon which all others depend is a thorough mastery of technic in the broadest sense. This includes a mastery of language as a means of expression and of literary style especially as the artistic use of language that makes literature. The great forms of composition, prose and poetry, must be thoroughly understood in all the details that differentiate them and adapt them to the expression of widely differing phases of experience.

CHAPTER III

THE LITERARY EXPERIENCE

I HAVE said that literature involves the highest order of human experience, that it is the expression of the meaning of life. In the implications of this truth the student of literature finds his greatest task, and in the performance of this task he reaps his highest reward. Literature implies knowledge, thought, imagination, emotion, and studying literature means training the mind to appreciate the elements of experience that enter into it. The power to know and to think, capability of imagination and feeling, are assumed at the outset of every undertaking to render the functioning of such faculties a joy and a delight.

Like all life, human life is most sensitive and alert at the very top. Only at the periphery of his being does man meet those subtle influences that transform his grosser nature. The great trees of the forest indeed have their trunks firmly rooted in the ground and from it draw the substance of their nourishment, but they also spread their leaves high and broad in the sunlight of heaven.

The leaves are sensitive and frail, often unable to endure even slight variations of temperature, but upon their proper functioning the life of the tree depends. Through them alone is it possible for light to wield its mysterious power and work its magic, transmuting the base and lifeless elements of earth, air, and water into the living, growing cell. Only as they perform their function can the tree have roots and trunk, bark and flower. They are that through which light calls the tree into being and clothes the naked hills with glory.

Man, too, is a child of light, living by visions that come we know not whence nor why, but somehow turning their rays inward to illuminate the soul. All man is or does is the result of vision; somewhere a light dawns and he hears a far call, an urge comes to life within him, and he cannot resist. He felt it long ago in the jungle, and it stood him erect upon his feet and bade him walk. Ever and anon it came with renewed strength, and still comes, often in unsuspecting moments, to encourage and sustain us on the long way. We cannot always live at high tension. The leaves cannot command the sun to shine; neither can we call at will the soul's light from heaven; but with effort and devotion we can live long in its afterglow. And sometimes, too, when we listen, we can even hear the faint notes that whisper to the

inner ear until they blend in harmony and discourse sweet music.

"We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides,
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides;
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern." *

All life cannot be noble, but we can ennoble living by sustaining and reviving those rare moments that have lent it significance. There are but comparatively few holidays and gift-days in a child's life, and yet how far these few days spread their radiance through anticipation and memory. So the student of literature must learn to cherish the bright spots in human experience. He must look forward to them, and having once met them and made them his own, he must never forget them. He must set himself to seek for them, and somehow he must develop within himself the power of recognition when they are at

* "Morality," M. Arnold.

hand. He must let himself sink back into the common nature of men, rise with its billows, be fretted by its surf, ravished by its storms. Inasmuch as men become man do they grow aware of their best selves; only as they realize in themselves the broad, deep life of humanity do their lives take on an abiding value, a constant worth. We must prize the truths men have lived by; we must thrill with the passions that have tried their souls. We must follow the visions that have led them, drink their cups of joy and sorrow, find in their faith strength and comfort to sustain us.

So to enlarge and intensify living is no easy task; it means mental growth, and growth is always painful even though it be pleasant. In order to grow the mind must be fed, and fed with the kind of food that will insure the development of the power desired. Thought, feeling, and imagination are at once both cause and effect of knowledge. Knowledge and wisdom are the rock foundation upon which all study and appreciation of literature rest. The student of the art of letters must be both learned and wise. All fields of knowledge, all phases of human experience, make up the subject-matter of his art.

Literature is a severe master; it tolerates no compromise; its demands are absolute. A thorough knowledge of language and form as media

of expression is paramount in any serious consideration of literature, and is presupposed as a qualification of those who would devote themselves to this department of study. But this is only a matter of technic and can in no way assure success. The mind of the reader must be brought to parallel the minds of the writers. He must think their thoughts after them, and more than this, he must pass judgment on the rightness and fulness of truth as they represent it. Shakespeare tells us that the poet's eye doth glance from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth. Nothing is beyond the pale of his art; all realms of knowledge are his, even the realm of the unknown. And Coleridge reminds us that there can be no great poet who is not at the same time a philosopher.

Learning to read literature means working diligently in all departments of knowledge. Art, history, science, philosophy, religion, and whatever else has entered into the mind of man, belong to the province of letters and so to literary study. To be sure, the student of literature cannot be a highly trained specialist in all of these different departments of learning, but he dare not be a stranger to any of them. He need not be an investigator in these fields, nor make it his endeavor to widen the scope of knowledge in any of them, but he must be familiar with the funda-

mental truths and significant facts as the specialists have accepted and established them. He must train himself to use their data and to follow their ways of thinking to just and logical conclusions. The creators of literature have always done this. They have seen truth and beauty in the manifold knowledge and wisdom of men, and through the forceful presentation of their visions they have been able to move others who are willing to read. So, if we would fully comprehend the work these creators have left us, we must do as they have done that we may in part at least know as they have known.

Furthermore, learning to read as the first step in the study of literature means coming to feel at home in the society of great minds and enjoying their company. Art is natural to man only through effort. Ease in any art comes only with mastery; difficulties must be overcome; much that we can do with perseverance alone must, before we are masters, be rendered habitual and reflex. High-mindedness is an art in which success is always directly proportional to effort. Here more than anywhere else the old adage holds: There is no excellence without great labor. And let him who earnestly aspires to a place in the holy of holies of human society not be deceived by those mockers of all that is sacred who lay stress on the

relativity of truth and virtue, and who are loud in their glorification of individual idiosyncrasies.

There is a sympathetic homogeneity in human nature that assures concord to life. High-mindedness is always at least ninety-nine per cent pure. Beauty, truth, and virtue are constant, if not absolute, and only a slight allowance can be made for personal equation. "What God hath cleansed, let not thou call common." To place my uneducated desires and judgments, my peculiar likes and dislikes above, or even by the side of, what the ages have approved, is only to blaspheme that right judgment of men through which alone all science and all art are possible. A whole-hearted reverence for truth as men have conceived it, and a sincere appreciation of their efforts to realize and express this truth, must be the aspiration of every one who would finally judge and estimate the value of ideas as they come to us.

The study of literature depends upon whether or not one can bring oneself to enjoy the kind of knowledge and the kind of thinking that the acknowledged noble minds of all ages and races have deemed worthy and alluring. Ease and assurance among the ideas that have gone into the making of classics are the unmistakable indications of that form of culture so indispensable to literary study. Not to care for Homer, or Plato,

or Dante, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or Goethe; to pride oneself on having outgrown the Bible; to find nothing but tediousness and obscurity in Wordsworth and Browning, is to betray a total lack of that quality and degree of appreciation that has made literature possible.

But high-mindedness means more than intelligence, more than subtle thinking and right judgment of the relative value of ideas; it means also right feeling. Noble emotions are as characteristic of great minds as noble ideas. Life at high tension is always passionate, and any expression of such moods is always emotional in nature. What does not move us can hardly be called literature, and being moved is largely emotional experience. We are accustomed to think of feeling as something elemental in our constitution, a matter of temperament that is as it is by nature and therefore not subject to modification. More and more we are coming to speak of intelligence, too, as the gift of nature not to be noticeably affected by the efforts of man. But while we may not increase the power to know, we can by constant effort increase the knowledge of any given intelligence, and so modify the manner of its manifestation. Likewise our emotional nature, however given, may be educated to function in greater amplitudes and with varying degrees of intensity.

We may not be able to change our sensibility to light or sound, but we can by persistent effort train ourselves to see and to hear specific objects or sounds with a high degree of expertness.

In the same way a sense of humor can be cultivated. If in its ultimate analysis humor is perception of incongruity, we can by strict attention bring ourselves to look carefully for the incongruity that may exist among whatever is present to the mind, and so increase the frequency with which humor comes into play. This frequency makes possible a sharper discrimination between what is commonplace and stale, and what is fresh and unusual. What is rare, subtle, or unusual in the perception of incongruity gives intensity to the pleasure in humor, and this is possible only after one has acquired some skill in discrimination. The yokel with an uneducated sense of humor laughs at everything and tries to amuse you with jokes however stale.

There is, too, by common consent a recognized gradation of emotion. One person's feeling may be better than another's, and the different qualities of feeling in the same person may be classed as higher and lower. In addition to differences in the quality of emotion there are degrees of intensity with which the emotional experience comes. Since literature reflects the whole gamut

and complexity of human emotion, learning to read in an appreciative, critical manner must concern itself with a conscious recognition of feeling as an element of artistic experience, and with a careful discrimination of its quality and intensity.

Just as the student must enrich his mind with a fund of fact and ideas through which he may work his way to a clear perception of significant truths, so he must also mellow and refine his temperament by a wide range of emotion. His feeling must be more than words; it must in some way be lived in order that he may be aware of the varying manner in which it enters and colors all his moods. He must distinguish in himself the quality of emotion that exalts life from that which debases it. Mere sensation is not enough; emotion implies ideas, something in the mind to be stirred. Heat cannot produce light unless there is some resisting material that can be made to glow.

The emotional appreciation of literature depends largely upon how far one can forget self, and be identified with the deep counter-currents of common humanity. Here especially is it true that losing one's life is the only way to find that larger life which is our rightful inheritance. Feeling is associated with what we are rather than with what we know or with what we do, and it

expresses itself most accurately in the attitude we assume in any situation or given set of circumstances.

The emotional life of man is constant and absolute, something to be possessed, not achieved. Age differs from age and individual from individual in knowledge, and what we do is as varied and peculiar as the color of the hair or the myriad notions that throng the minds of men. What we know or think we know is always subject to revision, and the work of our hands hardly endures to completion. But the great emotions that have stirred men's souls are ever repeating themselves, binding men together in a unity of being that makes common understanding possible. Great men of all ages have ever assumed a common attitude toward life. Their beliefs have always culminated in one grand belief, their truths pointed to one grand truth whose burning meditation lighted up the soul. Love, courage, fear, patriotism, wonder, resignation, reverence, adoration are not new in the world, and when they stir in you and me we identify ourselves with all men who have been so moved in sincerity and truth.

So it behooves the student of literature to look after his emotional life, to open his soul to the forces that have moved men, that he may take on the right attitude of being that has ever dis-

tinguished the true man. He can do this by bringing to life in himself those moods of ecstasy that men of all time have tried so hard to express. Shelley defines poetry as the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. It follows as a corollary that poetry or prose so inspired is the most potent agency to bring on the kind of mood from which they come. Love begets love, we are told, and the same might be affirmed of all emotional experience; it is contagious. What the heart has touched, touches the heart and quickens a new life. If while beholding a glorious sunset we can call into mind thoughts that have played in the minds of great men in like situations, if we can repeat their words, reinstate their images, follow the suggestion of their association, it is certain that we will be moved by a common feeling and share with them a common mood. Surely this is true of all emotional life; we can share the experience of the great, love what they have loved, hate what they have hated, revere what they have revered, if only we will take the trouble to bring to life in ourselves the moods they have taken the trouble to express for us.

Much has always been made of feeling in connection with the study of art and, therefore, it behooves the student of literature to be watch-

fully on guard. Nothing is easier for the tyro than to mistake sensation for emotion and to dignify the expression of his superficial sensuous pleasure with the words that properly belong to the nobler quality of feeling. It is a red-letter day in the life of a boy or girl, or even of young men and young women, when suddenly the truth is brought home to them that we do not love pickles nor adore the football captain; when they realize for the first time that love and adoration are made of sterner stuff, that they are not pure sensations, and can never be associated with the physical alone.

Sentimentalism, too, is near kin to sensationalism, and bubbles over at the slightest sensory excitement. Tears start whenever the flag goes by, or whenever the popular religious evangelist pronounces that blessed word Mesopotamia. Much enthusiasm for literature is of this kind, and the sincere student must school himself to detect the sham wherever he meets it. Light thrills are easy to be had, but they never sound the depths of life, nor is their influence marked with abiding change. Only as we are swayed by deep emotion do we touch the larger life, and this is possible only when the mind is busy with noble thoughts, great truths, far-reaching vision. These are the substance over which the energy of feeling

plays, and by means of which it ever kindles the emotional fire that illuminates the soul.

Emotion cannot be directly induced by talking about it nor by thinking about it in an abstract way. It can be inspired only through concrete imagery, and so is connected on the one hand with sense-perception, and on the other with imagination. It is through imagination especially that literature has power over the emotions, and through the exercise of imagination the student comes to master the difficult art of reading, realizing in himself the experience of the author as he expressed it in the printed words.

Imagination is a difficult topic for discussion, because the word has been used in so many different ways, and made to stand for such very different things in different departments of study, and even in the same department at different times. The psychologists and the critics of art both talk much about imagination, and while they both profess to be dealing with the same quality of mental activity, at the same time each uses the term with certain technical restrictions that are not mutually inclusive.

The Encyclopædia Britannica defines imagination in general to be the power or process of producing mental pictures or ideas. Webster is more complete and carries out the primary definition in

more specific detail: "Imagination is that power or function of the mind whereby we have ideal experiences; primarily, the power or process of having mental images; broadly, the power or process of forming ideal constructions from images, concepts, and feelings with relative freedom from objective restraint." The image-making power or process is the meaning usually attached to the word imagination by the psychologists, and this meaning is fundamental in the many uses of the word in art and literary criticism. But in a more general sense imagination means not only the power or process of making images — it means, too, the play of mind among these images, and the exercise of some selective power that figures in all mental processes, even perception.

The word image, like imagination, has been used with such different meanings that its use here must be carefully discriminated if we would come to a clear understanding of the subject before us. In the field of psychology alone the word has been made to serve so many purposes that its use is likely to be confusing. Owing to its use in connection with the purely physical phenomena of light, there has been and still is a tendency to associate image with the sense of sight. From this point of view Addison made imagination wholly an affair of vision. However, the word image may

be used with equal propriety in connection with any sense experience, simple or complex. Generally speaking, we mean by image in connection with imagination the permanent quality of percepts; the elements in perception that endure, that may be recalled and reinstated in consciousness after the direct stimulation or excitement has disappeared. We can readily understand the difference between a percept and an image if we try to recall some vivid sense experience of sight or sound and question ourselves about it; or, better, let some one else ask us questions about it. The old experiment of looking at some object, then closing the eyes and keeping the image in mind, will do well enough for our purpose. Any more complex form of percept would do as well; I mention sight and hearing because they are simple.

From such experiments it becomes clear that certain characteristics of the percept are retained in the image, vivid and permanent, while many others may be recalled vaguely, imperfectly, or not at all. Now, what determines the nature of the image? No doubt many factors are involved, some purely physiological, but in the main it is a matter of attention; the image consists of those characteristics of the percept of which we have been aware. To be sure, there are cases where the image seems to reproduce the percept in mi-

nute detail, so that the subject becomes aware of details in the image not noticed in perception. But even these extreme cases may involve no fundamental differences in quality or process of formation, and, if they might, they are too rare to be of much importance in our present study.

Imagery so conceived is an important element in conscious mental activity and enters into all our moods. It is through images that we are able to form judgments, and by means of association of images that life takes on its peculiar meanings. Images are associated according to schemes and patterns in which they individually play a part, and from which they take on significance. Many images and patterns are present in any mood, and many more are within ready call. Any new experience in the nature of perception that may come into the field of consciousness — say, some object of sight — must, so to speak, touch some pattern of association. If in some way it fits into this scheme or pattern, it becomes significant, but only to the extent in which it serves to complete the pattern. The qualities of perception so used constitute the image and become more or less permanent as the pattern is or is not full of meaning. What does not so fall in with patterns in the mind or within easy call, we speak of as not interesting us, and we do not attend to it. Often

we are not aware of possible experiences, because they do not in any way appeal to us; often we merely recognize them and immediately dismiss them. However, such slight disturbances of mind may be recalled with vividness as details of a larger complex image of the mood to which they present themselves. Any phase of experience is familiar when its place in some pattern is already assigned. When, however, any bit of familiar experience suddenly finds a place in some other pattern, it is invested with enlarged meaning and has all the charm of novelty.

Imagination, then, is concerned primarily with the making of images, and so enters even into perception. In this respect it controls not what we see but what we see in things. The patterns by means of which images are made and given a meaning are sometimes spoken of as association tracks, sometimes as laws of association of ideas. They are inherent in human nature, and so fundamentally common to all normal minds. But richness of imagery and so richness of meaning is by no means equal among men. Many men may see the same meaning in possible common perceptions if they come to them with the same things in mind. Often we cannot produce for ourselves patterns in which possibilities may become realities, but the transformation is instantaneous when

once some one else suggests the needed pattern for us. This sometimes is spoken of as passive imagination. That somehow Lucy and the violet and the star belong together, that there is a unity of being, one soul, revealed through all three, becomes clear enough when once Wordsworth points it out to us, although most of us never could have known it without his aid.

I have said above that imagination means not only the power or process of making images, but also the power of playing among the images; as the dictionary puts it: "The power or process of forming ideal constructions from images, concepts, and feelings with relative freedom from objective restraint." While the first use of the imagination is that with which the psychologist is primarily concerned, art and criticism have most to do with imagination in the latter enlarged sense of having ideal experience.

Literature as art is the reflection of whatever has meaning in life, and so may even include the simplest phases of mental experiences, but these usually get what meaning they have from some complex ideal in which they somehow play a part. Touching up a negative in photography often has significance, but it gets its value from the ideal in the mind of the photographer that directed his work in the touching. There is, too, a kind of

pleasure in pure sensation even when the image-making process is not carried on. But such pleasure must be very rudimentary, for when the sensation persists for any appreciable time, imagination is bound to become active and control the meaning of what we perceive.

Ideal experience has to do with what I have called patterns of association, the scheme of organic unity to which isolated images are assigned for meaning. Among the many images in the mind at any moment, no matter how diversified, we are aware of harmonies in which they blend, patterns in which they arrange themselves according to underlying unities. I have said above that these patterns are inherent in human nature and so common to all normal individuals. We are so constituted that experience moulds itself in forms conditioned in our nature as our bodies are repetitions of the same symmetrical unity. So thought and feeling reproduce themselves in many minds, if like conditions obtain. The same mental images suggest like patterns when they come into consciousness together. Any three points in the same plane but not in the same straight line may mean different things to different minds, depending upon the pattern in which they are imaged; to one a circle, to another a triangle, to yet another a tent, etc. But any mind

may in proper circumstances be aware of whatever patterns are possible to the human mind.

So Newton became aware of the scheme of gravitation through the falling of an apple; Mendel beheld the pattern of heredity in his sweet peas; the fathers of Christianity found man and man's life fully revealed through the living and the dying of Jesus of Nazareth. The scientist is ever in search of facts, mental images, through which he may be able to discern the patterns according to which the universe is organized. Often he can give the patterns so discerned some manner of objective representation. But it is not always possible for the artist and philosopher to give objective representation to the patterns of experience of which they are truly aware. Such patterns are ideals, and through these we arrive at our notions of ideal beauty and ideal truth.

The validity of ideal experience is often questioned by those whose world of reality is predominantly sensuous. For them reality consists in objective form that can become the direct stimulus of sensation. For such persons reality and actuality are synonymous. What is not or has not been actually represented cannot be true for them, real as they call it. However, such persons are not numerous, and their peculiarity of attitude is due to a lack of information rather

than to any inherent organic difference. Most often their attitude of mistrust manifests itself only toward certain phases of ideal experience, while with others they are in perfect accord. For illustration, a materialistic scientist may be thoroughly convinced of the reality of some scientific truth or law in nature long before it is possible to demonstrate this truth through concrete objective representation, while at the same time he will not recognize or admit the validity of ideal truth much more positively established in the field of ethics and religion.

In the same way the matter-of-fact mind is sceptical of so-called abstractions. It finds comfort in the old saying that seeing is believing. But generally this sceptical attitude disappears with knowledge. When the doubting or indifferent mind furnishes itself with the images and ideas related to the field of doubtful experience, the data through which imaginative ideal truth and reality may become apparent, the validity of such truth is usually accepted. In their best moments most men believe in the ideals that have been realized in the greatest minds, and find their lives most significant when in accord with what has been declared to be the true meaning of human life, although we may not be ready at all times to subscribe to the manner in which some noble

minds have attempted to give these ideals concrete form and expression.

Disbelief in the validity of imaginative experience is the result of different degrees of sincerity or intensity with which the power or process is exercised. Mind is a very complex and composite entity, and not at all times equal to its best. As it busies itself with the images and ideas that constitute its subject-matter at any moment, various phenomena are likely to become apparent. The play may be superficial and amusing, often grotesque, almost always ludicrous and irrational. Ideas may be brought together for the sole purpose of accentuating their superficial likenesses or differences; parts of images may be combined to make new images without any notion of organic unity or rational probability. In many instances even the check of possibility is not operative. The centaur is the conventional illustration of this manner of image-making; the mermaid, or the pansy with a child's face, will do as well. Slightly different but belonging in the same class is the substitution of the virtues of some well-known patent medicine for the last line in each stanza of a familiar hymn. In such cases the effect is amusing, often entertaining, but always irrational.

For the last hundred years it has been cus-

tomary in literary criticism to speak of this kind of mental activity as fancy rather than imagination. Fancy plays a significant rôle in all art, especially that intended for the more frivolous type of mind. Its purpose is primarily recreational; it amuses without effort, and requires no thoughtful attention for its comprehension. The popular movie and jazz are fanciful in so far as they are anything worthy of the name of art. In literature fancy is most prevalent in popular poetry, light fiction, melodrama, and farce. While it may amuse, it does not inform the mind, and cannot be accepted as valid because of its loud dissonance with reason.

Fancy represents a mood in which the process of imagination is allowed to go on while reason is voluntarily held in check, or it may represent a mind constitutionally unbalanced. The mind, so to speak, is not all there, and the resulting experience, be it never so pleasing, is bound to want some quality necessary in our ordinary conception of truth. Imagination, on the other hand, is never at war with truth. It represents the full mind operating in perfect agreement. Nothing that is proposed is executed without the sanction of reason and feeling. The patterns discerned among the many ideas in the mind must be rational and organically unified. To be sure, imag-

ination may go beyond reason, but it never goes contrary to it. In this sense Wordsworth speaks of imagination as the higher reason, in that it can still proceed when the data for reason are no longer at hand. Often it becomes the sole means of providing the necessary data whereby reason can function. Through imagination alone we are able to arrive at universal judgment, so necessary in any process of deductive reasoning. Furthermore, emotion and sentiment are never outraged by imagination. It is the means by which they are purified through ideal experience.

By creative imagination we usually understand the process of arriving at new ideas through the media of those simpler images and notions already familiar. The new is not made out of the old and familiar; rather it is discerned through them, and brought to light in much the same manner as a star not visible to the naked eye is made visible by the telescope. The star is not made by the lenses; they only reveal what already exists. Shakespeare did not create Macbeth by patching together certain elements of character extracted from the few or many men he had actually known. Through his ideas of men living and of men and events kept alive by history, he was able to discern another man, not actually possible in the objective materialistic sense, but

theoretically real and ideally true. As poet the only medium through which he could give this ideal experience representation is language. He must create his man in language; that is, choose words and so arrange them that through the images they call up in the minds of others, these others may become aware of the ideal image in his own mind. As dramatist he goes still farther and represents a number of such vital characters playing together and revealing themselves through action as well as through speech. The sculptor works with clay and marble, the painter with line and color, but each, like the poet, is creative in that he in some way controls the possibilities of his medium, that through his use of it truth and beauty, not otherwise discernible, may become the common experience of men.

Imagination is not always creative; it may be interpretative. The artist may not have for his object the representation of a new idea or image; he may intend only to modify some notion already quite familiar. In the Lucy poem referred to above, Wordsworth does not create for us a new ideal woman. By associating the girl with the violet and the star he modifies somewhat our notion of Lucy, so that she becomes a creature of more value. Our idea of Lucy becomes more vivid, more intense; he sets her, so to speak, in

a stronger light, but she is still Lucy. So he heightens the experience by making very strong and clear what before was weak and indefinite.

I think we can readily see now how the play of mind in making images and arranging them in patterns, whether the process be fanciful, interpretative, or creative, is necessary for the higher order of thought and emotion. It is through imagination alone that ideal experience, of whatever nature, becomes possible. Without imagination our knowledge would be limited to the simpler forms of sense-impression, and feeling, hardly more than that invoked by pure sensation, could never take on the degree of intensity that is characteristic of emotion. The validity of truth would disappear with the possibility of concrete objective presentation, and perfection would be synonymous with the actually real. Through imagination it is possible for us to be aware of truth and reality not directly knowable as objective sense-perception, and by means of truth so apprehended we are often enabled to find in the most commonplace things meanings not otherwise discernible. It is possible for us so to furnish the mind with ideal imagery whose presence is attended with a quality and degree of emotion not attainable through the simpler avenues of experience. Insight, vision, the soul's lexicon where-

in it finds the meaning of isolated concepts, belongs to the imaginative mind alone. Without imagination man would not be man and human life would have no meaning.

The student of literature must develop the power of imaginative reading. Only as he is able to arrange his thought and feeling according to ideal patterns is it possible for him to have the insight into truth, the consciousness of beauty, that work exaltation of spirit. Culture has been defined as the study of perfection, the spiritual realization of those perfect circles the broken arcs of which constitute the essence of objective reality. Clear vision is the primary inspiration of hope, and hope is at once the handmaiden and companion of faith, the grace of God by which alone men can be saved. To read imaginatively is to see truth, beauty, and perfection as the artist has tried to represent them for us in his words. It is quite different from reading for fact alone or for light sensational thrills; it requires a careful working out of details, a far call into the remote recesses of experience, in order that many things may be at hand for the mind to shuffle and arrange. For many people imagination means only the lighter phases of fancy, or nothing more than sheer memory. To read imaginatively is for these people to let one's mind wander idly and aim-

lessly among whatever comes to it without effort. Often it is no more than simple imagery of words. But genuine imaginative reading is quite a different process. It is to use even with the utmost effort the full powers of the mind.

The primary purpose of literature is to move, and it does this through its appeal to the emotions. Emotion cannot be awakened by abstract words or cold logic. Generally speaking, philosophy is not literature, because it is an abstract appeal to the reason. Imagination is the only power through which emotion is possible because it furnishes the concrete imagery necessary to exalted feeling. Literature, being the expression and at the same time the inspiration of such moods, must be given a style more imaginative than other kinds of writing, and reading literature is a more imaginative process than other kinds of reading.

In the first place, figurative language is richer and more abundant in literary style than in any other kind of writing. The literary author does not hunt for metaphors, similes, and personification simply as a means of embellishing his style. He uses them because they were a part of the experience he wishes to express. They represent concrete imagery, because such imagery figured in his mind and provided the moving power of

his feeling. The figurative expressions of poetry and literary prose must be carefully worked out by the student if he would be aware of their proper significance. Figures are often the result of highly involved mental processes; as it were, the interweaving and intersection of curious and peculiar lines of association. Frequently they seem no more than so many words until we have carefully disentangled the threads of ideas so artfully interwoven.

A few examples will illustrate my point. In the second stanza of Collins's "Ode to Evening," how many readers, even admirers of the poem, take the trouble to see the picture so figuratively portrayed?

"O Nymph reserved, — while now the bright-hair'd sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts
With brede ethereal wove
O'erhang his wavy bed."

Or these similes from Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind":

"Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing."

"Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread

On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm."

Even those fairly well acquainted with the mysteries of literary style may well pause here. Do they realize concretely what the poets have tried to represent in words? The last stanza of Shelley's ode is so rich in imagery that its power of suggestion is next to exhaustless. Over and over again we can honestly ask ourselves, What does this mean?

Highly figurative style is not peculiar to poetry; it characterizes literary prose as well. I open "Sartor Resartus" at the pages in the chapter "Idyllic" where Carlyle portrays the child life of Teufelsdröckh. "Thus," he sums up, "did the child sit and learn. These things were the alphabet, whereby in after-time he was to syllable and partly read the grand volume of the world; what matters it whether such alphabet be in large gilt letters or in small ungilt ones, so you have an eye to read it?"

And again, speaking of how the child wondered at the wagons, as they came and went over the village roads, he suddenly remarks: "Any road, this simple Entephul road, will lead you to the

end of the world." Does the casual reader ever arrive at Carlyle's meaning so wonderfully suggested by figurative speech? Carefully and painstakingly working out the rich suggestion of such passages is what I mean by imaginative reading.

But imagination enters into literary style in still other ways. The rhythm of poetry, the verse and stanza, are part of the pattern in which the thing was conceived. Even the paragraphs of prose, the outward form through which it appeals to the eye, have a purpose about which the writer cannot be careless and which the reader may not ignore. In fiction and drama, character and plot are the larger elements of style through which the artist speaks. They are, so to speak, the more composite images in his scheme. Here, too, the careful student must take heed that nothing escapes his attentive consideration.

Finally, as art, a piece of literature — poem, story, essay, or drama—must be comprehended in its entirety as a complete unit. We cannot read a novel, or a drama, or a long poem as we do a book of history, or science, or even philosophy. A literary work is conceived and put together for some meaning represented by the work as a whole. To be sure, the parts contribute to the expression of this meaning, but what they do in themselves is related to the effect of the whole, much as a single

tone is related to a chord or a single voice to the chorus.

Often, perhaps generally, history, science, or philosophy is not so written; we may understand and appreciate the parts without relating them to any unified meaning in the whole book. The historian may relate the events of a period without being in any sense aware of any unity of idea in the material with which he deals. The scientist is likely to spurn the notion of unity of purpose in the subject-matter of his study. But the literary artist must have some single end that marks the goal of his book; one master idea that pervades the whole work; without this his composition would hardly be art. "Macbeth" as a whole means something; so do "Paradise Lost" and "Henry Esmond." To find this final purpose is the aim of the student, and here study differs from mere reading.

Since this larger meaning is represented by the construction of the work as a whole, it is the expression of the author's creative imagination, and must be imaginatively interpreted by the reader. While the author's method was analytical — that is, seeing the whole first, then its simpler elements and details — the reader must work synthetically; he must see the final complete meaning through the details as he comes to them. The student of

one of Shakespeare's plays must keep everything in mind until the end of the play, and then try to keep the play in its entirety before him, and through the different acts and scenes see finally the master idea in the author's mind as he worked it out in the play.

Finally, then, let us say, the study of literature involves the careful cultivation and development of the higher orders of experience that differentiate man from the brute — thought, emotion, and imagination. The first purpose of the student of literature is to store his mind with ideas, ideas that have stirred the soul to serious reflection, and moved it with deep and noble emotion. He must form the habit of letting imagination play among these ideals and images, that through them he may become aware of eternal truth and perfect beauty not otherwise apparent in the phenomenal world. So he will come to feel at home in the society of great minds and sympathetically share with them the nobler quality of human experience that constitutes the meaning and joy of life.

CHAPTER IV

SELF-EXPRESSION IN THE ESSAY

The essay as a type of literature has been variously defined, but these definitions, even when formulated by writers who were successful essayists, give little more than vague and imperfect notions of what the thing really is. Doctor Johnson, an essayist of importance, defined the essay as "a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular and orderly composition." Murray's New English Dictionary, several centuries after Doctor Johnson, speaks of the essay as "a composition of moderate length on any particular subject or branch of a subject, originally implying want of finish, but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range." Edmund Gosse, in the Encyclopædia Britannica, says: "The essay is a composition of moderate length, usually in prose, which deals in an easy cursory way with the external conditions of a subject, and in strictness, with that subject only as it affects the writer." While these definitions express something in common, they tell us, too, that the word essay has

meant different things at different times to different men.

In accord with these definitions the term essay has been applied to a variety of writing differing widely both as to subject-matter and form. Single paragraphs of only one hundred or two hundred words have been called essays, and books of several hundred pages have borne the same title. Even verse compositions of considerable length have been named essays, as Pope's "Essay on Man" and "Essay on Criticism." Of subject-matter there seem to be no restrictions as to what may be treated in some manner of essay. Writers concerned with the most abstract thought of science and philosophy often try to put their work in so-called essay form, while, on the other hand, writers of the most trivial nonsense are given to essay-writing also. We find, then, an almost infinite variety of essays in style and content often so different as hardly to admit of any family relationship. There are scientific essays, philosophic essays, critical essays, familiar essays, essays in verse; even sermons and lectures are often printed and classed as essays.

However, in the literary sense the essay is something quite unique and easy enough to recognize. It is, as Doctor Johnson says, "a loose sally of the mind," likely to be more or less irregular

because it admits of a freer flow of thought, the exercise of mind under less rigid discipline, than does the treatise. This does not mean that the essay is disorganized and faulty in composition; it means, rather, that the essay is the ready and easy expression of a mind orderly by nature and systematic by habit. Even in moments of playful abandonment minds of this type cannot forget their habits nor betray their nature. What comes from them seems to come without forethought or design, and yet has about it unity and order. Almost any subject-matter may be the concern of the literary essayist if he has lived with it long enough and intimately enough to have it warmed with feeling and vitalized with imagination. Only when this is true will it have the qualities of style that make any writing art, and only when writing is artistic can it justly be called literature.

The literary essay, often called the familiar essay or the personal essay, belongs to the class of literature usually spoken of as subjective. It is written in the first person and concerns itself with the experiences of the writer known and felt to be his own. It represents life as he lives it and not as he sees it in the lives of others or as he deals with it imaginatively in generalized abstractions. The essayist is engrossed with his own thought

and moved by the thrill of his own feeling, so that he becomes, as it were, the centre and absorbing interest of the world. What happens is of importance only when and because it happens to him. So the essayist is willing to take us into his confidence and talk to us about himself, not about what he has in common with other people, but about what is peculiar and personal to himself. The slightest details and minutiæ of experience, be they never so eccentric, are full of significance, because in them and through them life for him has had its momentary charm. His manner and style are free and easy because he has confidence in himself and assumes that the reader either willingly or of necessity must surrender to the charms of his personality.

From what has just been said it is clear enough that the essayist must have a mind peculiarly adapted to its special work. In the first place, the essayist must have the charm of personality. Without this his work is lifeless. The great essayists have always been men about whom other men loved to gather. From Montaigne to the present time the essayists of note have been the centres of social groups, men to whom others were willing to listen, whose conversation was entertaining, whose wit was provoking, whose fund of knowledge poured itself out spontaneously and

without apparent aim or purpose except sheer delight in the high tension of immediate pleasure.

The essayist usually is a man or woman of wide reading and much information. He must have a suggestive mind ready to start some interesting train of ideas at the slightest provocation. The commonest objects become the subject of meditation, and when diligently cultivated produce fruit abundant and of rare quality. Hats, ears, old china, chimney-sweeps, sleep, murder, walking, prayer, death, have proved equally fruitful when planted in minds capable of warming them into germination and of nourishing them into maturity. Often the subject is nothing more than a primer, something to set the mind going, and when once under way, ideas come readily enough, although they may be remote from the initial subject. But this is what the name essay means, a light attempt, or, in Doctor Johnson's words, "a loose sally of the mind."

In the familiar essay we do not expect a systematic study or treatment of the subject. We do expect copious ideas — thought, wit, humor, feeling, whatever gives zest and meaning to experience. But we would have this come easily as conversation with a friend. The essay mood is not in sympathy with discipline and restraint. What it does should be done freely and in the

spirit of improvisation and abandonment. The essayist gives us of himself most naturally, going on from thought to thought, seemingly careless of all plan or purpose. Often he arrives nowhere, he settles nothing, solves no problems, but he has enriched our experience through the ideas and points of view that he has offered us, and the new horizons that have opened to us just beyond the realms of the familiar. Intimacy must somehow spring up between reader and author, and our gain is the greater by the degree with which we are able to identify ourselves with the writer, forget him, and feel his experience as our own. In the essay, perhaps more than in other types of literature, the reader must help out the writer. What he contributes is of no less value than what he receives. He must read between the lines, and what is not on the page is no less significant than what the words have said. All of this means simply that the essayist addresses himself more especially to his peers, and by them only can he be fully appreciated.

The essay is more intellectual than emotional. It represents meditation rather than passion, and wanders over the plains of life rather than ascends to its peaks or sinks to its depths. It makes no pretensions beyond the ordinary in life, but often brings down to earth the stars of heaven and the

gems up from the bottom of the sea. Yet the essayist is not necessarily a scholar in the modern sense of scholarship. He busies himself not so much with the discovery of facts and the rational classification of details; his interest is more in the imaginative perception of truth, in the light of which he interprets the ordinary experiences of life. The essayist usually has a retentive memory and lives from moment to moment in the midst of a rich experience. Incidents in his own life, persons whom he has met, his much reading (the essayist is always a great reader), are ever present with him, and provide abundant fertility for copious suggestion of ideas and revelation of truths not readily discernible by minds less gifted. His ready perception of the incongruities of life, as well as its harmony and beauty, often enliven his style with wit and humor.

The essayist is fond of anecdote and allusion, and by a free use of metaphor often succeeds in giving a novel and pleasing flavor to what might otherwise seem only flat recognition of standardized conventions of thought and ideas. He is ever looking before and after over the long road, pointing out interesting places here and there that we have missed or may miss, reminding us of byways where we might have sauntered, suggesting holiday excursions to shrines long dedicated to

hours of holiness and sacred thought but remote from the main-travelled way of ordinary interests. So his appeal is ever to our understanding. If we would surrender ourselves to his guidance and comprehend the meaning of life as he has experienced it, we must know many things and keep this knowledge ever fresh in mind. While indeed the essay may be only a "loose sally of the mind," yet it tolerates no indolence. It represents alertness of mind, copious information, and acute understanding, and where these are not present there is no response.

But although emotion is secondary to thought in the familiar essay, it is by no means absent or a negligible quality. Somehow meaning is always bound up with feeling, and unless our knowledge can in some way be breathed upon by emotion it is for the most part "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." The feeling of pleasure is not the result or accompaniment of any particular or special psychosis, but may be distributed over an almost infinite variety of functionings of mind. Pleasure may be inherent in pure sensation; it may also be present during most intricate processes of reason. Discovery and recognition of fact and truth are always pleasurable and so freighted with significance. Surprise is ever agreeable. A new truth discernible through old sets

of facts delights us in much the same way as does the finding of a pearl in an oyster.

Much of the pleasure the essay brings is of this nature. It is delight in the exercise of intellectual powers; the sudden coming upon new truths in familiar places, or finding old ideas in strange and novel company; following through all their intricate ramifications trains of associations incidentally suggested or casually hinted at by the author in passing. The charm of style, joy in the felicitous choice and ordering of words, is no small part of our pleasure in essay-reading.

But this is not all; the essayist does not stop here. Granting that his primary purpose is intellectual, stimulating thought, provoking ideas, yet he does linger on proper occasions to play with our feelings deliberately. To be sure, the essayist is denied the strong musical effect of poetry, but he may bring into play all the subtle charms of tone-quality that language is capable of consistent with the requirements of good prose. Words may be chosen more especially for their beauty of sound, and so arranged that their rhythmic order lacks only the regularity of metre to make them poetry. But over the pictorial element of language the essayist holds supreme command. What words can do by way of bringing pictures before the mind the essayist is free to

practise, and his mastery of this power of language is ever a source of emotional effect. Descriptions ranging from single-word metaphors or epithets to many sentences and even paragraphs commonly adorn the pages of the essay. So much use is made of this manner of stirring the feelings that many of the lighter essays and nature themes are little more than successions of pen-pictures harmoniously hung and ingeniously lighted.

Characterization, although belonging more especially to the objective forms of literature, is often used by the essayist with good effect. Sir Roger, Captain Jackson, Samuel Salt, and Bridget are familiar personages to readers of the essay, but they, like most essay characters, are descriptions of persons from actual life rather than artistic creations. The essayist presents his characters for emotional effect rather than for any intellectual purpose. They arouse in us an emotional attitude more in sympathy with the author's mood and so more susceptible to the influence of his ideas.

In the familiar essay imagination is interpretative rather than creative. The writer is not concerned with showing us a new ideal world in which the fragmentary or hidden truths of life are completed and clearly revealed. He is telling us about his own life, about the experiences that have come

to him here in this our every-day world. To-day he may be interested in the line of thought that came to him during a walk, or as he sat by the sea. To-morrow it may be an incident in camp, a bit of humor among friends, or memories of youth and childhood. Perplexing problems and theories of the day that will not harmonize in his scheme of things, deep grief or joy that moves his spirit in the presence of the mystery that overshadows us in our helpless ignorance, — these are the themes to which he calls our attention, and he is charmed by the light through which imagination gives them meaning. What the essayist sees he tells us directly, often relying on the bold fact stated in the most abstract terms.

The essay is unpretentious and is not conceived in any definitely constructed plan as a whole. It grows from idea to idea, organically unified to be sure, but not according to preconceived design or blue-print pattern. Imagination catches the ideas as they come and warms them into life. It does this by giving them the most appropriate figurative setting, by a juxtaposition of imagery through which the exact meaning of the writer cannot escape us even though it is blended with an almost infinite variety of connotations. Through a richness of metaphor and allusion the essayist is able to focus directly on the centre of his object

while the diverging lines of interest spread ever more and more over an indistinct but alluring background. So he interprets for us the seemingly colorless experiences of his life by throwing on them the varying lights and shadows of the many ideas and images that constantly throng his busy mind. So he helps us to see into the heart of life. Fact and truth, scarred and wrinkled by age-long service in the common mart of humanity, are quickened into a new life, and come forth with the freshness of youth from the baptism of ideas and associations he has poured upon them.

The style of the essay is as undefined as the subject-matter. Being personal, no restrictions can be imposed. Each writer must be a law unto himself, subject only to the special whims of his varying moods. For the most part the essay is expository; yet description enters into its fabric very largely as ornament. But often the essay becomes narrative, taking on somewhat of the nature of a story. In fact, there are pieces of writing that are indifferently classified as essays or short stories. The essay may even be argumentative, but pure argumentative style cannot be long sustained without losing the beauty and simplicity of expression that give the essay its peculiar charm and literary value.

It is in the smaller matters of style, such as paragraph, sentence, phrase, and single word, that the essayist works his magic. Here he gives evidence of his capacity for taking infinite pains. Perfection in the mastery of details is the aim and ideal of the essayist. Often the subject-matter with which he deals is not new; it may even be trite and conventional. His business is to give it life, new life if necessary, and he can do this only by careful attention to the manner of expression. So the essayists have given us our finest prose. In fact, the development of English prose style during the past three hundred years is largely the result of the essayists' efforts to mould English prose into an effective means of artistic expression.

The purpose of the essayist is to enrich and delight the mind, and he seeks to do this through copious ideas clearly and beautifully expressed. Anything consistent with this purpose it is his privilege to do. His phrases and his periods must be faultlessly rounded and rhythmically ordered. Words must be chosen not only for exactness of meaning but for beauty of sound as well. Both the direct and the figurative significance of words must be called into play, that thereby the literal sense of language may be heightened by the added beauty of concrete imagery. Whatever is un-

pleasant, harsh, or ugly must be carefully and studiously avoided. Here, perhaps more than in any other kind of writing, form and content are identified, and the thing done is defined in the manner of its doing.

The familiar essay does not lend itself well to classification. Being subjective, it represents personality and mood; so its chief virtue is in being unique. Personality and mood do not repeat themselves, and the records they leave — no matter how they are labelled — are usually one of a kind. To group essays together according to title is about as helpful as grouping people according to name. Essays on Walking, or Books, or Travel have little more in common than the people named Mary or John. On any other basis classification is hardly more satisfactory or instructive. At best classification is a kind of busy work from which the returns usually fall far short of the expectation, and, where the matter is so diversified as in the familiar essay, but little can be expected. For purposes of study it is as well to consider each essay by itself, or in a comparative way to relate it to other essays by the same writer, or to essays on kindred themes. But even in such comparative study we are likely to lose sight of the essay as the object of our study, and to centre our attention on other things, as the

author himself, or the doctrine from which the essay themes seem to have come.

As a type of literature the familiar essay is distinctively modern. It is commonly agreed that Montaigne invented the personal or familiar essay, when in 1570 he retired to his tower for the purpose of living in quiet and study. In 1580 he published the first collection of his writings under the new name of *essais*. Not all of the pieces included in this collection can be called familiar essays, but some of them assuredly are, and sometime during the ten years preceding publication he must have invented this type of writing. To be sure, personal writing in the form of letters and lessons was common enough before the time of Montaigne, but such writings were more matters of instruction than of self-portrayal, as Montaigne avows was his purpose in writing the essays.

Closely following Montaigne, and perhaps under his influence, Francis Bacon was the first to publish essays in English. In 1597 he published ten pieces, little more than collections of aphoristic sentences, under the title of essays. "The Word," said Bacon, "is new, but the thing is old." These early attempts of Bacon can hardly be classed as familiar essays, but by the time the final edition of his essays was published in 1625, he had quite mastered the kind of thing Montaigne had in-

vented. Throughout the seventeenth century there were sporadic attempts, indifferently successful, at this type of literature, sometimes resulting in a form of character writing after the fashion of the classics; sometimes, as in the case of Cowley, producing a fine specimen of genuine personal essay.

Under the influence of periodicals during the earlier years of the eighteenth century, and quite generally throughout the century, the essay was given prominence as a manner of writing, and the familiar essay became more and more common as a type of literature. But it was during the first quarter of the nineteenth century that the familiar essay reached high-water mark as a method of literary expression. When we think of the essay we think at once of Lamb, Hazlitt, Hunt, De Quincey, and others who wrote during this period. These essayists, it seems, set the standard for all time. Lamb is the prince among them. In the way of familiar essay, nothing better than "Elia" has been done, and it is questionable whether anything yet produced in essay form can quite equal Lamb at his best. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries familiar essays became more popular and more abundant, but can hardly be said to have improved in quality. To-day the familiar essay almost rivals the short story in

variety and abundance of output. It is a common type of magazine article, and books of essays come frequently from the press. It seems to provide a means of personal expression in prose for those who lack the ability or inclination to use the age-old poetic form of the lyric.

The essay offers a natural and logical approach to the study of literature. In the first place, it is a type of literature abundantly produced at the present time. It is always at hand, and the fact that it is commonly used to-day as a means of expression in writing is a strong incentive to treat it with respect. Furthermore, the essay is on the border-land of literature, where what is not art gradually becomes art. A poem, a story, or a drama must be a work of art or it is nothing. But the essay in general, and even the familiar essay in particular, may have value as science, philosophy, history, or biography, even though it may lack the finer qualities that make it art. It is easier to come to a mastery of details in art where artistic perfection comes gradually than where it is flashed upon us in all its finish and glory. The essay is short, and its excellence as art is in the perfection of detail rather than in unity of composition as a whole.

The essay appeals primarily to the intellect, and accuracy as well as the finer shades of mean-

ing in paragraph, sentence, and word may be carefully studied with less danger to the effect as a whole than in the epic, the novel, or the drama. Where the meaning of life expressed is primarily emotional, any halt for intellectual apprehension breaks the tension of feeling. It is like shifting into low on up grade; the charm of the experience is broken. But where emotion waits upon understanding, whatever enlarges comprehension intensifies feeling. In the essay we may justly ask, What does this mean? of almost every word and sentence, certainly at every figure and allusion. The meaning here has a greater degree of definiteness than in the more emotional types of literature, and we have a wider playground where we may enjoy the game together.

Lastly, the essay is written in prose, a form of composition more readily mastered to-day than poetry. The crude elements of prose style in the artistic essay are the same as in any other prose-writing, and whatever mastery of reading we may have carries over here. If we have learned to read books of science or history, the essay does not seem so very strange, but I have found many students who fail to recognize fairly familiar words when they meet them set in the formal rhythms of poetry. So word by word and line by line we

may work ourselves into a full understanding and appreciation of the essay, and power developed here will be of use in more difficult ventures at literary study.

CHAPTER V

THE LYRIC MOOD OF RHYTHM

The change from prose to poetry of any kind always involves considerable shifting of mental machinery. Suddenly the stops of feeling are thrown open, and the understanding is more delicately tuned to subtler sympathies. The thinking process still goes on, but our thought is all aglow with the fire of emotion and the warm coloring of imagination. The measured rhythm of poetic language is in itself sufficiently strong to charm the mind into obedience and to lead it into whatever ways of pleasantness the sounds of the words may offer. The music of poetry pleases even when we may have no comprehension at all of its meaning in the more restricted sense of thought and idea. Often people are deeply moved by the reading of poetry in a foreign language of which they do not know a single word. The rhythm and tone-quality alone awaken in them a consciousness of beauty that gives significance to what is otherwise a meaningless experience.

The lyric is at once the most passionate and the most musical of all the different kinds of poetry. Like the essay, it is subjective in nature,

being the expression of the inner life of the poet in moments of high emotional tension. For the most part, the lyric is shorter than the essay. It represents a single emotional mood, and as no intense feeling can be long sustained, it cannot be embodied in any prolonged form of expression. The lyric mood is always "impulsive, vivid, emphatic, and soon over." The essay may be prolonged to almost any length so long as interesting and appropriate ideas come in relation to the subject about which the writer is thinking, but the lyric must end when the single emotion that gives it life is over. It is a kind of flash-light experience in which a flare of passion suddenly lights up for only a moment whatever the mind seems to hold of thought and knowledge. The lyric is a sudden cry of joy or pain that wears itself out in regular rhythmic utterance; so it becomes musical, at times even a perfect song or hymn.

The word lyric comes from the Greek λύρα (lyre), which meant a musical instrument of the harp type used to accompany song or recitation. Lyric or lyrical was first applied to that kind of poetry which was sung or recited to some musical accompaniment. It still is used to characterize song of any kind, but it includes a great deal of poetry that is not intended to be sung or that cannot be set to music. In fact, it is difficult, if not impos-

sible, to say just what it is that differentiates the lyric from other kinds of poetry, narrative and dramatic. When we fix upon any qualities that lyrical poetry has in a high degree, it is hazardous to affirm that other poetry does not have the same qualities, although other poetry may not have these qualities in the same measure or degree. Some writers even go so far as to maintain that lyric, epic, and dramatic are tautological or meaningless terms when united to the word poetry. Poetry, they say, is always poetry, no matter whether it be sung, recited, read, or accompanied by action.

We may say, then, that the lyric has in a very full measure those qualities that differentiate poetry from prose. It is distinguished from the epic and the drama by being professedly the representation of the author's own peculiar experience and not his experience ostensibly in the rôle of some one else. Furthermore, the epic and the drama are long poems composed of many moods, presented for the most part in any one language in a single rhythmical pattern or in a very limited range of patterns. In English, when we think of epic or dramatic poetry, we think of iambic pentameter blank verse. To be sure, other patterns are used occasionally, but this one type prevailingly dominates. Other languages likewise have

their epic and dramatic rhythms. The lyric, on the other hand, may take, and has taken, an almost infinite variety of patterns, except that it seems not to go well in the national epic and dramatic rhythms; there are very few successful attempts to write an English lyric in pentameter blank verse.

The lyric is a matter of mood, in which the emotional element dominates. When the intensity of feeling relaxes or, as it were, cools off, the lyric mood is over. The lyric poet varies the rhythmical pattern to suit the mood, and makes use of every possible arrangement of words to heighten the musical effect of his poem. The measured rhythm of line is not sufficient for his purpose; to this he usually, almost universally, adds both rhyme and stanza. The shorter units of sound and movement must recur not in miscellaneous order, but grouped in larger units of fixed regular patterns. Even the thought element of the lyric is regularly repeated with unity of idea but variety of imagery to accompany the recurring patterns of rhythm. The sole object of the lyric poet is to represent his isolated mood of single thought and single emotion, and he intensifies this experience by repetition of rhythmic pattern with variety of tone and imagery.

In the epic and dramatic types of poetry the

emotional mood is not the whole thing; story, plot, and characterization come in for a large share of attention. The meaning of life is represented in a larger way, although perhaps with no greater degree of intensity. Lyrical passages may occur in these longer poems, but the passion of the moment is subordinated to the conception of the whole pattern. It is, as it were, a bit of detail that must harmonize with the theme of which it is only a part. To be sure, Cleopatra's dying words are Shakespeare's; so are the soliloquies of Hamlet and Macbeth; but they are only incidental to his large experience represented in the characters and plots of the plays in which he has embodied them.

The lyric, then, being a matter of mood and personality, may be concerned with any subject and take almost any form. Goethe's notion that the poet's vision may be directed toward three objects — nature, man, or God — has become classic and will serve our purpose here. Nature means the phenomenal world apart from man of which we become aware through the senses. Objects in nature may be the cause of poetic vision and the direct inspiration of the lyric mood. A flower, a star, the song of a bird, a sunset, almost anything, may bring on the mood of poetic vision when to pure sensation is added the perception

of beauty, and a thought somehow caught from the floating imagery of consciousness fixes the experience in a rhythmic order of words.

Nature lyrics are common and vary over a wide range of intensity and value. Often they are little more than sensuous delight in some object, and the poet's effort is only an attempt to prolong the sensation; as in "Spring," by Thomas Nash, "The Song-Sparrow," by Henry van Dyke, "Wild Geese," by Celia Thaxter, or "The Lapland Longspur," by John Burroughs. Sometimes they are the most perfect embodiment of profound emotion and significant truth; as "Break, Break, Break," by Tennyson, "To a Waterfowl," by Bryant, or "Gloucester Moors," by William Vaughn Moody. The meaning of life is not found in sense-experience, and the better nature lyrics usually carry their imagery over into the realm of man for comparison or contrast. Even the landscape-painter usually puts some human figures in his pictures. Nature becomes truly significant only when it is endowed with human life.

The lyric mood may be directly inspired by man. Love, hatred, friendship, patriotism, hope, heroism, have been constant themes of endless variation. "The proper study of mankind," says Pope, "is man." Whatever man does becomes a moving force in the lives of men. To be sure, the

fundamental experiences of the race admit of little or no variation, but they seem new to each one of us, and it is ever a delight to live over again with others what was once a new experience. Individualism is the essence of the lyric, but it must be an individualism through whose brighter colors the deep-dyed sober hues of humanity are clearly visible. The love-songs of Burns or Goethe were indeed their own affairs, but after all they stir us in much the same way; for love is love and has been since the beginning of the race. Milton poured out his soul in anger and disapproval of the wholesale slaughter of the Piedmontese, and when the Germans invaded Belgium we found his sonnet ringing in our hearts as if it were our own. Deep calls unto deep, and the tide of human feeling rises highest in the narrow inlets and secluded bays of personal experience. In the intenser moments of individual experience — feeling, thought, vision — we become aware of the great surge that ever moves in the deeps of life; of the warm heart that beats itself out in passion; of the brain that answers unto thought; of the imaginative spirit that catches now and then, fitfully, indeed, but surely, faint glimmering flashes of eternal light.

> 'Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,

> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things." *

The most powerful lyric mood is that in which the vision of God bursts upon the soul. Consciousness of God is the highest form of human experience, and when the finite human spirit feels itself in the presence of that which gave it life, the infinite from which it came, as it were, face to face with God, in whose perfect image it recognizes the end and culmination of all its weakness, its hopes, and desires, often the spirit is silent. There is no voice and no language. Sometimes only a cry of awe, of wonder, of admiration, of joy. Tennyson's lyric cry is the fullest expression of such moods: "Hallowed be thy name — Hallelujah!" But the high tension of feeling cannot be long sustained, and the lyric cry resolves itself into a mood of meditation. The finest specimens of this type of lyric are to be found among the Hebrew psalms. To be sure, the experience here represented may often be national or tribal rather than personal, but the quality is quite the same. In moods like this the experiences of the group and of the individual approach each other until they finally lose themselves in identity. Psalms

* "Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth.

8, 104, 105, 113, 148, 149, 150 are good illustrations of this kind of lyric, a sharp cry of adoration that wears itself out in meditation.

Universality is one of the qualities of all fine art, and in connection with the lyric the question naturally arises: How can that which is peculiarly a matter of mood and individuality have the quality of universality which is necessary to all fine art? Here we are face to face with one of the most puzzling problems of human experience. How can unity and multiplicity characterize the same phenomenon, or how can things be the same and yet different? Without attempting to answer this question finally, we may come to a reasonable understanding of how it is reconciled in the lyric poem.

Literature is concerned with the meaning of life, and life has this dual aspect. Men have much in difference and much in common. What the relative proportion is at any time it is not possible to say, but the artistic experience of any moment must go beyond the personal and penetrate the common nature of man. The thought and emotion of the lyric poet must go deep enough to be at one with the undercurrents of all humanity. Love, patriotism, hope, sorrow, adoration belong to man as well as to men, and when the poet experiences them and represents his ex-

perience to us, a common chord is set vibrating in us by sympathy, and we feel his passion as our own. The meaning of life is quite constant, but there is an almost infinite number of ways of approach. Beauty and truth are ever the same; God is always God, yesterday, to-day, and in all eternity; but we come upon them in different ways and amid peculiar circumstances. Suddenly the lyrist sees a great light or hears a still small voice. They are the same that men have always seen and heard, but they are new to him because he has come upon them where and when he did not seek them. He finds an old experience among new imagery, new words, new rhythms. This novelty is always a delight, and assurance is strengthened by the element of constancy ever apparent in a world that seems to change.

When we speak of the structure of a lyric we mean the nature and distribution of the elements of experience that make up the lyric mood. How are imagination, emotion, and thought blended and arranged in the lyric form of expression? Professor Erskine has given us the most definite statement of the structure of the lyric, and while we may not find it possible to apply his notion in many cases, while many lyrics may seem not to be so constructed at all, yet we have in his clearly formulated conception a very helpful sug-

gestion for study. He says: "Speaking broadly, all successful lyrics have three parts. In the first the emotional stimulus is given — the object, the situation, or the thought from which the song arises. In the second part the emotion is developed to its utmost capacity, until as it begins to flag the intellectual element begins to reassert itself. In the third part the emotion is finally resolved into a thought, a mental resolution, or an attribute."*

Shelley's "To a Skylark" is a good example of what I think Professor Erskine has in mind. The poem begins with the presentation of a picture — the singing skylark at sunset. The picture consists of a series of perceptions that excite the lyric mood. These run through the first six stanzas. Then in the next six stanzas attention runs through a series of images that are brought into the picture by imagination until the feeling is strained to the highest tension. When emotion reaches its highest pitch, it is sustained for a moment, and then reflection begins. Meditation increases as feeling subsides through the next six stanzas, until in the last three stanzas the mind settles back into a normal state of equilibrium. Here we have the plan of Professor Erskine perfectly executed. The skylark's song is the ex-

* "Elizabethan Lyric," p. 17.

citing object or incident. The imagery into which it falls in the poet's mind arouses strong feeling, in the light of which new ideas break into consciousness, and start a train of meditation which finally passes into a state of quiet ready for some new form of excitement.

In Dryden's "Song for Saint Cecilia's Day" we find much the same structure. The exciting agency is the thought of music as a force in the world inspired by a picture of Saint Cecilia or memories revived by the day sacred to her. The thought starts the imagery going. The music of the spheres, the beginning of music in human life, the various effects of orchestral instruments, elevate the feeling until it brings heaven to earth in Cecilia playing. Then comes the "Grand Chorus," more thoughtful, as emotion gradually beats itself out.

Milton's sonnet "On the Late Massacre in the Piedmont" repeats the same plan. News of the massacre presents a picture to the poet. Immediately his mind is thronged with images in harmony with the thought and picture. The fire of feeling is fanned to white heat by the images as they come and go. Intense passion soon burns itself out, and the afterthought comes and lingers.

In Thomas Nash's "Spring" we have a different kind of lyric; one made wholly of feeling. The

thought of spring, perhaps only the word, starts a series of images whose coming brings attendant feeling. There is no thought. The poem consists of pure imagery. The delight is that of almost pure sensation. To be sure, the pleasure is heightened by the consciousness of unity that binds the images together, and so suggests interpretative insight into the deeper truths of nature and life. No thought as such is definitely stated, but does not the thought come with the last "Spring! the Sweet Spring!" that here we have been brought to a clear perception of some grand force back of all this manifold method of expression, of some living unity, some being that pervades the whole of things through which they feel themselves akin? So even here emotion fades away into meditation and thought.

It is time now to consider somewhat more fully the element of imagination in the lyric. We have defined imagination as the image-making faculty of the mind through which it discovers truth and beauty existent in our world of reality but not otherwise discernible. How does imagination function in the lyric experience? In the examples cited above we have seen in each case how the images come with each exciting force. Imagination not only constructs the images but determines their order and the scheme of their arrange-

ment in consciousness. It is through the imagery, single and in sets, that the light of truth and beauty shines. Feeling is quickened by their presence, and fades away in thought suggested by the new truth revealed.

If we take any good lyric, say Tennyson's "Sweet and Low," and try as we read it to reinstate the imagery accurately and vividly until the whole mood is called to life in our own consciousness, we can realize better just how the lyric poet uses imagination to create for us a momentary experience of the ideal world. The opening of the poem is vague and indefinite. *Sweet* and *low* are words belonging to different senses and bring no certain imagery. But *wind* and *Western sea* do carry very specific images of sight, sound, and touch, and with their coming give definiteness to the words that have gone before. *Blow* and *breath* bring together in the mind both animate and inanimate characteristics, and link the human with the seemingly soulless. The *rolling waters* and the *dying moon* complete the nature setting. *Him*, *me*, and *little one* suggest the human figures in the composite image. *Sleep* and *rest* in the second stanza are rich in connotative imagery; varying pictures come to mind. *Father* likewise calls up many images and fixes the meaning of the pronoun in the first

stanza. *Breast* and *mother* give concreteness to what is only general at the close of the first stanza. Here the whole picture bursts into consciousness: a mother singing her babe to sleep in her arms while she thinks of her husband who is far out at sea and longs for the wind to blow him home. As she lays the babe to sleep in its bed, *nest* becomes the image-bearing word and brings the life of man and other life in the world together. The disappearance of sails all out of the west tells us that the father is in port and will soon be home.

The picture is one of humble circumstance, perhaps a fisherman's cottage, but the mother-love carries us out of this little world into the great beyond. Here surely is Goethe's eternal feminine, something more than mere woman. The veil of the actual has been lifted, and for ever so short a moment we have been permitted to live in the presence of the motherhood of God and to share its quietude, its peace, its love. What thoughts come in moods like this? Surely none but what ennoble life. We are aware of the riches in store for us when at almost every turn we may be walking with angels unawares, when the godlike and the heavenly everywhere are shining through the common world of actual circumstance. Surely the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.

In another lyric by Tennyson, The Bugle Song, also from "The Princess," we are permitted to see into the hidden truths of existence by a system of images called into the mind in such a way as to make this revelation of truth possible. The bugles with their echoes, the castle wall, the snowy summits old in story, bring together in our minds the far-off and the near, the ancient and the contemporary; and as the echoes bring back from the distant hills the bugle tones mellowed and indistinct, so the castles and mountains call back the life and thought of long ago. Man is made one with nature, he is set forever in the universe of which he is a part. As the bugle songs echo and re-echo among the mountains, just so the thoughts of man, his passions, his love, his hopes, and ideals repeat themselves in the souls of men, sounding and resounding across the ages. We are forever retelling the stories of our forefathers and rebuilding their temples, in different words, to be sure, and in different brick and stone, but with the same joy and sorrow, the same reverence and aspiration.

So it is that the imagination of the lyric poet in moods of high tension catches glimpses of the ideal world, and fixes them forever in the patterns of images through which it is his privilege to find them. Only as we reconstruct his pictures

after him can we become aware of the beauty and the truth that shine clearly through the words out of which he has fashioned for us his constellations of the ideal heavens that shine above our little world of actuality where we are busy with so many things.

I think it is not difficult to understand now how emotion and imagination are organically related and inextricably interwoven; intense feeling stimulates imagination and copious vivid imagery quickens emotion. Here, too, consciousness and will come into play. While we commonly think of feeling as something not subject to voluntary control, we have, too, a notion of very ancient history that somehow the higher emotions are subject to direction, and that we can place the affections where we will. To be sure, we may not have the power to say directly what images and memories shall throng the mind at any instance nor the order in which they shall be suggested, but in the main vividness of imagery waits upon attention, and in so far as attention is voluntary both imagination and emotion are subject to control.

In the lyric, as in all poetry, or all literature for that matter, the poet must so order and arrange his imagery that the unity of emotion is not disturbed. Light must be allowed to play

only upon such images and objects as are capable of arousing the same or nearly kindred emotions. Whenever any object or image not consonant with the ascendent emotion is permitted to become the centre of attention, the emotional element of the mood is neutralized or even completely changed: the serious often becomes trivial; the sublime, ridiculous; the noble, ignoble.

Parody consists almost entirely in provoking a mood of high serious emotion through appropriate imagery, and then suddenly centring attention on some discordant image to break up the serious emotion. There is of course a kind of pleasure in parody and incongruity, but a sudden shifting from high to low gear cannot be executed without some risk of machinery, and when done in ignorance or unnecessarily the experience often becomes painful and disgusting. Only such imagery as will sustain the dominant emotion must be permitted to engage the attention, and when the climax is reached there must be no sudden breaking up or emotional relapse, but passion must gradually fade away into a mood of noble reflection dominated by vision and thought of like order with the emotion.

But in all poetry, and in the lyric especially, emotion is not wholly a matter of imagery. Rhythm and all sound quality of language stir

the feeling, and often are the principal source of emotional effect. The lyric is very closely related to music, and in its most elementary stages the musical element, no doubt, is what makes the strongest appeal. The simple rhythms of line and stanza, the frequent recurrence of rhyme, are in themselves sufficiently able to stir the feeling even when no specific imagery or idea comes with the words. The tone-quality of words, too, affects us as agreeable or disagreeable, often determining in a large measure what our reaction toward a poem shall be. Music moves us not only directly but also by suggestion through association, and in so far as music enters into the nature and substance of poetry its subtle moving power is operative. The emotion so aroused must be in harmony with the imagery and the thought brought together in the poem. The lyric is the expression of a mood; no discordant elements can be tolerated at the risk of sacrificing the unity of experience. The lyric must, so to speak, be born alive with all its various elements functioning in perfect harmony.

The lyric is essentially emotional and in its simpler phases is perhaps wholly so. But articulate language is the instrument of thought, and whenever indulged in or encountered the mind at once becomes suspicious of ideas. We assume that

language has a meaning, and by meaning we understand some thought, idea, or truth that can be expressed with reasonable accuracy and comprehended with an equal degree of assurance and satisfaction. As we have learned before, emotion is not opposed to thought; on the contrary, it is the accompaniment to thinking and may even be aroused and intensified by ideas, perception of truths, that set our consciousness on fire.

To be sure, there are many lyrics that seem to be almost purely emotional. They stir us through the rhythm and through the simple imagery often standardized and of ancient service. But, on the other hand, many lyrics are packed with thought. When we call to mind the poems of Tennyson, Shelley, Wordsworth, Milton, Shakespeare, and others who have given us some of our best lyrics, I am sure we must agree that thought makes up no inconsiderable part of lyric poetry, and much of our pleasure in reading such poetry comes from clear comprehension of its ideas. Thought may not be of first importance in the lyric mood, but it is by no means absent and must be reckoned with in any study of poetry worthy of the name.

The student of the lyric must be sure of the ideas expressed in the poem. Slovenliness of thought or indifference to matters of intelligence

are as baneful in the study of poetry as in any other kind of study. It is not enough to surrender oneself to the charm of rhythm and tone in language, or to let vague and indistinct images pass through the mind with whatever stirring of emotion may come gratuitously. No doubt these words and images in their various groups and patterns mean something to the reason and the understanding as well as to the heart.

Sometimes this meaning is clearly expressed in simple sentences where the judgments of the author cannot be misunderstood. Sometimes it lurks among the figures, images, and allusions with which the poet decorates his thought and speech. To appreciate the lyric in any worthy manner the student must know intimately every word the poet has used and clearly comprehend the relationship by which he has arranged them in the order he has chosen. Often the poet's thought is subjected to violent inversions: the ordinary phrasing of ideas is broken up; elements of the sentence may be shifted and transposed; because truth as he knows it is vibrant with passion, and must sing itself from soul to soul. So frequently it happens that the best lyrics give up their meaning slowly and only with persistent effort on the part of the student. It is not true that the best poems are those most readily under-

stood and appreciated by any reader who has a speaking acquaintance with the words used. Life is not trivial, and its most significant experiences cannot be had for the asking.

The style of the lyric, like that of the familiar essay, is very free. The subject-matter is limited to a single mood, and generally requires no marked arrangement of language to indicate classification and proper subordination of ideas. The experience, indeed, may be highly complex, but it is organically unified, and in so far as possible must be flashed upon the mind together. In the essay words must be chosen primarily for their thought quality; no matter what else may be added, this must not be sacrificed. But in the lyric the musical quality of words is as much a part of the subject-matter as is the thought, and must have equal if not greater consideration. Beauty of sound is of no less importance than accuracy of notion. Beauty of imagery in connotative words is a stronger factor in determining their value than copiousness, a few images, or even a single image, of rare beauty often outweighing a whole gallery of plainness and mediocrity. Vividness and intensity rather than volume are the ends sought and must in every instance be given precedence.

The arrangement of words is as organic in the

lyric as the words themselves. The measured rhythm is inherent in the nature of the poem and must in no sense be violated. The poet is free to choose any rhythm pattern in harmony with the mood of experience he wishes to represent, but the pattern once fixed cannot be altered without peril to the poem. So it happens quite frequently that he must resort to violent inversions of the regular sequence of words in the sentence in order to make them fit the rhythm pattern. To be sure, his sentences must be grammatical, but they need not be logical, for the poet's appeal is not primarily to the reason or the intellect, but to the understanding, and strictly logical arrangement may be sacrificed if the loss thus sustained is more than compensated by emotional gain. Neither is it his purpose, generally speaking, to focus sharply on any precise point or small area of fact, but to give sweeping generalized impressions, especially when he is concerned with the representation of truth felt rather than demonstrated, and not always applicable or evident to experience in every minute detail. The following poem by Wordsworth will illustrate what I have in mind:

> "She dwelt among the untrodden ways
> Beside the springs of Dove,
> A Maid whom there were none to praise,
> And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
  Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
  Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
  When Lucy ceased to be,
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
  The difference to me!"

It is evident enough, I am sure, that were it not for the rhythm pattern, common logic would demand that the appositive noun with its modifiers should not be placed in the third and fourth lines after the predication of which it is virtually the subject. When we come to the second stanza we may say with justice that there is not in fact much, if any, resemblance between a maiden and a violet or a star, and yet when the images are thus brought together the harmony of feeling is perfect. The effect is like that of harmony in music; we mix three tones, and what we hear is not three notes but a chord.

An interesting case of inversion comes to mind in the following stanza from Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard":

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
  And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour,
  The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

Here the object comes before the verb and its subject; but so little care and thought have been given to style in this poem that even reputable editors have changed the verb *awaits* to the plural form, clearly showing that they have mistaken the object for the subject of the sentence. The first stanza of "A Psalm of Life" is another well-known instance of freedom of style in the lyric. What is the logical relation of the third and fourth lines to the first and second? Yet the style may be correct grammatically in several ways. The emotional effect is satisfactory enough, and we are not aware of anything unusual until we try to state definitely just what the stanza means.

The student of the lyric must master the peculiar difficulties of style if he hopes to come to a full appreciation of the author's meaning. The casual or indifferent reader may be contented with no more than the pleasure derived from the rhythm and tone of the language, reinforced occasionally by some beautiful image; but such experience cannot be called study; it is mental indolence, and if persistently indulged in becomes chronic, perhaps even fatal.

The lyric admits of more satisfactory classification than the essay, and for purposes of study classification is often a very material aid. In the first place, lyrics may be classified according to

subject or mood; as, lyrics of love, nature, patriotism, etc. Such classification is valuable in that it helps one to a clearer understanding of how the different elements of thought, feeling, and imagination are woven together and blended in experience when excited by the same objects in different minds or in the same mind at different times, or by different objects. It is through such study that the universality of common human nature becomes more significantly apparent.

However, a commoner method of classification is according to rhythm pattern. The English lyric is almost universally moulded in some form of rhyme and stanza. There are a few lyrics in blank verse, but the ones of merit are so few that blank verse is negligible in almost any study of English lyric rhythms. To be sure, there are many mixed forms in which other types of poetry are blended with the lyric, such as the dramatic lyric and the narrative lyric, but this miscellaneous body of poetry need not concern us here.

There are three general groups into which the lyric may be conveniently classified according to rhythm pattern: the song, the sonnet, and the ode. The song includes that miscellaneous body of lyrics that have no regular or fixed rhythm pattern. Stanzas may be of almost any number of lines or length of line bound together by any pecu-

liar rhyme scheme. There are, of course, many set patterns among this miscellaneous collection, but these are hardly prominent enough, or persistent enough throughout long periods of history, to warrant any further general classification. Such forms are the rondeau, the triolet, the sestina, the villanelle, and the ballade. These are very artificial forms in the English, for the most part rhetorical imitations of the French and Italian.

The sonnet, too, is a foreign form introduced into English from Italy during the sixteenth century. Petrarch, the inventor of the sonnet, has given his name to the sonnet that follows his rhyme scheme and method of distributing the thought of the poem; but in English there are many forms of sonnet that differ from the Petrarchian type, the most common of which is the so-called Shakespearian. The sonnet consists of exactly fourteen lines of five stresses. In the Petrarchian type the lines are grouped in sets of eight, the octave, and of six, the sextet, with the following rhyme scheme: abbaabba, cde cde. Sometimes the rhyme scheme of the sextet varies from that just given. The thought is introduced in the octave, and finally completed or applied in the sextet. The Shakespearian type consists of three quatrains, rhyming alternately, followed by a rhymed couplet. In this type there

is no division of thought with reference to octave and sextet.

The ode is also of foreign origin, coming either directly or indirectly from the Greek. The Pindaric ode consists of three parts, or movements, corresponding to the movements and position of the singers and dancers. The parts are: strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The strophe and antistrophe are constructed exactly according to the same rhythm pattern, since they accompanied the singers across the stage and back again. The epode is in a different rhythm; it represents the performers at rest. The Pindaric ode has not been very popular in English poetry; however, there are some fine representatives of this type, notably Ben Jonson's "A Pindaric Ode on the Death of Sir H. Morison." Interest in the regular Pindaric ode was revived in the eighteenth century by Congreve, but interest has not been well enough sustained among poets to give us many good examples of the type.

The irregular, or Cowleyan, ode is far more common in English poetry. This has, generally speaking, no fixed pattern of stanza or rhyme; neither are the lines of even length. The movement is varied to suit the mood. Later it became the custom to call almost any dignified poem formally written to commemorate some person or

event an ode. So we find poems in a great variety of rhythm patterns entitled odes. In subject-matter the ode is usually thoughtful, and of length suited to the dignity of the subject that has called it forth.

Historically the lyric is spread over the whole field of human experience. Having so large an element of music in its constitution, it is difficult to say just when in the evolution of civilization and art the lyric as a poem began. We are likely to think that the poem is a matter of articulate speech that carries more or less of thought content in addition to the music, but it is not possible to determine when the sounds and cries through which primitive men gave expression to their personal experiences of joy or grief, wonder, fear, and amazement, took on the nature of articulate language. The humdrum monotony of sound with which the savage accompanies his dance in celebration of victory or whatever other experience moves him may, indeed, to him be symbolical of thought equal at least to the music of his crude performance. Primitive life was more homogeneous than human life to-day, but, for all that, it does not follow that a man's joy or sorrow was less personal because less peculiar, and what may seem to be the expression of tribal experience may also have the true personal qualities of the lyric.

While we may not be able to say definitely just when the lyric had its beginning, we can say that in English literature the lyric has been with us since early Anglo-Saxon times. To be sure, the output has not been constant in quantity nor in quality. Like all other forms of human invention, the lyric has changed in fashion as the interests of men, either from caprice or necessity, have shifted among the many phases of experience that give the individual life its meaning. The history of culture seems to reveal a more or less regular swinging of the pendulum of behavior from the extreme of individual freedom and caprice to the other extreme of standardized conventions. It is only natural that lyric poetry, the expression of personal experience, will be more prolific, and so perhaps of finer quality, in times when the stress of life is on the importance of individual difference, and less abundant, and perhaps inferior, in times of severe conventionality.

The first great period of lyric poetry in English ranges from the second half of the sixteenth through the first half of the seventeenth centuries. Then there was a lull for about a hundred years, until about the middle of the eighteenth century, when the personal song again became more abundant, and in many ways superior. Since then the production seems fairly even in quantity, but

waves of varying excellence often appear evident. The varying interests of men from age to age are reflected in the subjects of their songs and in the elements of artistic experience stressed in their composition. Music, imagery, feeling, thought, each in turn seems to sway the minds of men, so that the whole chorus often shifts in unison as a single man's life moves from mood to mood.

In summary, then, it may be said that the lyric, like the essay, is subjective; that is, it is the direct expression of the author's own personal experience. Like the personal essay, the lyric is short, being limited by the duration of a single mood, but the lyric differs from the essay in being more highly emotional, and so, perhaps, often less heavily weighted with thought. This higher emotional quality of the lyric is expressed in poetic style, in which the element of music is not only prominent but emphatic. Not only is the style metrical, but the words are chosen for their beauty of tone and imagery. Imagination and thought must be in harmony with the rhythm pattern of the poem, so that there may be unity of emotional effect. The lyric seems to follow a more or less general plan of structure that reflects the nature of highly emotional moods. Some object or thought excites feeling, which is carried by imagination to a high degree of emotional intensity; then, as attention

centres on some new truth or idea, the emotional tension relaxes. The style of the lyric is highly figurative, and the regular order of words is often violently inverted to support the general rhythm pattern. The lyric is spread over the whole history of human experience, but is more abundant and of finer quality during periods in which the stress of behavior is on individual peculiarity.

A study of the lyric includes a clear and accurate comprehension of the thought expressed. This is accomplished through a careful study of the meaning of the words used and a minute analysis of their arrangement and relationship. Furthermore, the poet's imaginative experience must in so far as possible be reinstated in the reader's mind. Image-bearing words and figures must be clearly realized and brought together in consciousness in whatever sets and patterns the poet has conceived them, in order that the truths revealed by his visions may become apparent. In order that the music element may have full sway, the lyric must have auditory appeal. The importance of reading aloud cannot be overemphasized. Even practising reading for the sake of bringing into perfect accord the various forms of stress and rhythmical movement often becomes necessary, if thought, imagination, and emotion are to function together in a mood of intense appreciation.

Reading aloud is especially necessary for students who have a weak power of auditory imagery, and much effort at times must be expended in constructing and reconstructing pictures that play a part in the poem in order that their influence may not be lost to those whose visual imagery is vague or sluggish. In this way only can we in any worthy degree approximate the full appreciation of the meaning of life, whose expression is lyric poetry.

CHAPTER VI

EPIC STORY AND THE BALLAD

The essay and the lyric belong to the general class of literature usually spoken of as subjective. That is, through them the author tries to express what seems to be peculiar to himself, his meditation and emotion as they are excited by contrast or agreement of the actual world with the ideal world as imagination presents it. For the most part the essay and the lyric are not only personal but also moody.

Love lyrics reflect not only the author's feeling but the varying shades of feeling as different persons are seen against the background of the ideal, or as different qualities of the same person become the centre of attention. Goethe and Burns wrote many songs differing as the many Charlottes and Marys who in turn are viewed in the light of the lover's ideal world. On the other hand, Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese" presents a number of scenes in which the lover is portrayed in different situations, bringing into the foreground various

qualities and characteristics of the actual and the ideal.

The essay, being more thoughtful than the lyric, is the direct expression of the author's reflections with reference to some object, event, behavior, or person as momentarily considered in relation to the ideal world. The accompanying emotion, usually not so intense as in the lyric, may run through the whole scale of quality and intensity according to the degree of contrast or agreement that becomes apparent. Both of these forms of literature are creative in that they reflect some ideal in the presence of which a bit of actual experience becomes of more than ordinary significance. This heightened meaning is always personal, and at times becomes rigorously a matter of mood.

Objective literature is never a matter of mood, except, perhaps, in some short stories or very short plays, and it is personal only as every man's life and work bear the marks of his own limitations. Each conceives the ideal as he is capable of conceiving it through such facts and incidents as it is his privilege to know, and in the presence of this ideal he gives interpretation to the actual world as he finds it. The purpose of the objective artist, the author of epic, novel, or drama, is to represent life, not his own life, in such a way that

we may be moved by contrast or agreement of the actual and the ideal. Through the imperfect we become aware of the perfect, and are refined and purified by the feeling and thought excited. Our pleasure is both moral and æsthetic: moral, in that we accept or reject the ideal conception as represented, and approve or disapprove of the actual as measured against this as a standard; æsthetic, in proportion as we do or do not have any experience of the beautiful either in the matter presented or in the manner of presentation.

The objective writer presents us characters in action in such a way that moral and æsthetic judgment is called into play. Often he comments directly on the actions of his characters so there may be no question about the ideal standards according to which our judgments must be made. Often this ideal world is only dimly shadowed in the background. Often it can only be inferred from occasional hints of the author's approval or disapproval of the characters and action he has chosen to present. The author may not at all times be aware of a system of philosophy that expresses his attitude toward life, but from the life he portrays, the reader consciously or unconsciously does construct some kind of system in which what is presented might logically and æsthetically take place.

The epic is a long narrative poem of heroic proportions, organically constructed, progressing regularly from a definite beginning to a fixed close. It differs from the lyric in that it was intended primarily to be recited instead of sung, and from the drama in that the narrative is not accompanied by imitative action. Usually the narrative is unified about some central hero whose deeds furnish the subject-matter for the poem. The epic consists of narrative by the author and conversation among the characters, usually in the form of speeches of considerable length. Occasionally, the author may interrupt the narrative with reflective comment on the nature and accidents of life with which his subject-matter is concerned.

The purpose of the epic is to move us with the heroic and godlike in human nature. To achieve this purpose, the poet conceives a world of enlarged dimensions, and peoples it with characters of heroic proportions. The world of the epic is not our world, and often the characters are not human beings; but the ordering of events, the cause-and-effect relationship of incidents, the principles and motivation of behavior are true to life as we live it. However, the representation is ideal, imaginary, not practically demonstrable. To be sure, the epic often deals with history and his-

torical personages, but it finds its most appropriate material in the region of myth and legend. The epic utilizes the elemental experiences of life, and reaches back into prehistoric ages for appropriate material to represent its fundamental meanings. Supernatural machinery is brought into play, and the stage is set for gods and demigods.

The epic is concerned with extraordinary achievement, with experiences and accomplishments just beyond the reach of ordinary men. In moments of exaltation, when the blood is still hot from battle, in the presence of victory or defeat, the soul sees and feels itself adorned with majesty and excellence. Somehow we seem to have a passion for sublimity, and at the least hint we project our little deeds into a world of supernatural proportions. The epic poet appeals to this quality in our nature. Often he utilizes as material what came from men spontaneously in moments of high tension, terrific passion, and sublime endurance. Improvisation on the field of battle, unrestrained expression of self-adulation in moments of severe trial, become the very special subject-matter of epic poetry.

The epic always deals with the past. It is concerned with some great struggle the outcome of which has proved to be of supreme importance to

the race or nation. Often it is made wholly or in part out of material — story and song — that came immediately with the events it chronicles, but this material is worked over to give to the distant past something of the nature of prophecy. The epic interprets life as destiny, and while it utilizes the past, it never loses sight of the future. Human life with all its struggles, even to the most trivial details, is viewed as incidental in some larger scheme of things where its destiny is assured. Through the little stage of the world we may behold the wide panoramic reaches of the other world where our troubles and meaningless trivialities become matters of deepest significance.

This other world is usually typified through gods and godlike men moved with like passions and purposes of men, but enlarged, intensified, and idealized. To be sure, in many, perhaps in most, existing epics these superhuman beings may be only symbolic representations of impersonal forces at play in the universe, but by figurative representation in human form man's identity with these forces becomes clearer and more emphatic. The love of the gods, their hatred, their joy, their strength, and their beauty represent enlarged proportions of like human qualities, but many stages removed and idealized. Extraordinary heroes, often demigods, typify the borderland of

being where the human is blended with the divine. Man's life, then, becomes only an indistinct reflection of a larger, more comprehensive, drama in the remote purposes of which it finds its meaning.

It is no easy matter to conceive this other higher world from the few broken hints we find in this. Heaven and Olympus may be nothing more than light fancies fashioned for amusement out of the pleasantries and incongruities of our week-day experiences. On the other hand, they may be eternal realities imaginatively experienced through the actual world. It is needless to say that the epic poet accepts the latter interpretation, and his vision is at once the inspiration and confirmation of his faith. His interest is not so much in men as individuals, but rather in great movements and races, circumstances and events that have given color and direction to civilization. He finds the meaning of life in the capricious workings of fate or in the visitations of overruling Providence, through which the destinies of humanity and the world are manifestly revealed.

Epic vision is clarified by age. If eternity is adequately symbolized by the circumference of a circle, it is evident enough that the remote past and the distant future approach each other as they recede from us. The epic poet deals with antiquities; myth and legend of prehistoric ages

are his favorite material. Time has worn away the petty interests and concerns of the individual, and the fundamentals of life stand out bold and may be judged in the light of human destiny. The clash of civilizations and moral ideals, the founding of a state politically dominant in the world, the soul's struggle and advancement from hell and suffering to the supreme bliss of heaven, the origin of sin, man's consequent suffering and agony in the sacrifice through which alone redemption is made possible — such are the great themes through which the epic interprets life in the light of destiny.

The epic accomplishes its purpose through the narration of events so joined and related that the larger truths of existence are clearly demonstrated. Plot, if we may call epic narrative plot, is less condensed, less rigidly constructed, less personally motivated than in the drama or novel; but it is more unified than history and more decisively motivated. The characters through whom the action is worked out are usually less vividly conceived. Our interest is not so much in the persons to whom things happen as in the things that happen. The characters are heroic, more than ordinary men, because they play a part in action that goes beyond our little world and our short-lived existence. Thus the epic becomes the highest

achievement in the form of poetry, and consequently the rarest. Often it has become possible only after the material used had been worked over for ages until it was ready for some supreme poet to give it final interpretative and appropriate form.

All objective literature is highly imaginative, creative in that it represents characters in action. The epic is concerned with the narration of events in such a way that through them destiny may be apparent. This involves the creation of characters great enough to support the action, and the construction of a world in which the action may be staged. In the greatest epics this has meant nothing less than the working out of a whole cosmic system, a philosophy in which the world and human affairs are viewed in the light of their relation to final values and eternal truths. No doubt this is what Coleridge had in mind when he said: "There is no great poet who is not also a great philosopher." The epic poet must be a philosopher endowed with imagination sufficiently able to give concrete embodiment to his generalized abstractions. Often, especially in the folk-epic, this has been done for him, and his chief task is to identify his experience with the imagination of the race and to represent it concretely.

Like all art, the epic is characterized by unity,

harmony, and proportion. It deals with a large subject, and this must be treated with completeness. According to Aristotle, the epic must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The length must be adequate, and details must be copious enough to give to the whole work the effect of reality. The characters must be clearly enough conceived that we believe in them and accept the reality of their deeds. But they should not be so vividly portrayed that we become interested in them personally at the expense of the events in which they play a part. The characters are subordinate to the action and must not dominate our interest. Some critics have maintained that in the "Paradise Lost" Satan became the hero of the poem in spite of Milton. I think they mean that Milton portrays Satan so vividly that our interest in and admiration of him have a tendency to obscure the great theme and action of the poem. If this is true, it is a fault. It is not the Satan who tempted Adam and Eve, nor the Adam and Eve who were tempted, that should engage our attention, but the fall and its consequences. Aside from this larger creative process, imagination works through all the lesser elements of style, but there is not the diversity that we find in the lyric, or in the drama.

Emotion in the epic is less intense than in the

lyric because it is less moody and concentrated. It is constant in quality, and with varying degrees of intensity may be revoked at intermittent periods over a long number of years. The epic cannot be read at a single sitting, and its composition is the result of years of effort and labor. The feeling aroused by the epic lacks the fire of sudden passion; it is subdued by long years of study and familiarity. The rhythm has little chance for originality; it is quite generally fixed in each language, and except in the hands of unusual masters has a tendency to become monotonous and even wearisome. To be sure, the characters are often presented under the stress of powerful emotion, and this, of course, is contagious. Descriptive beauty and the tender sentiments are allowed to play among the more significant matter and work their will with us, but the dominant emotional tone is quiet, steady, and sublime.

The prevailing emotional tone of the epic is sad. This may be because life in the light of destiny as we are able to conceive it must be sad. There is so much that we cannot satisfactorily account for, so much of the trivial that is personally dear to us. It is always sad to come to a clear knowledge of the fact that the gods and destinies care very little how we feel about the parts we have

been assigned to play. No doubt the serious reflections of a child are always sad. Personally and momentarily he cannot span the great gulf that separates him from the adult members of his society and comprehend their standards of value.

In a sense the epic interprets life in much the same way. Beings like us but beyond us are at play in a great drama in which the principles and laws run true to our own lives. In their struggles and destinies we see our own portrayed and enlarged. Our personal preferences, our likes and dislikes, carry over into the epic world, and in the working out of its purposes we suffer the same disappointments. In the epic as in the actual world we are frequently moved to sympathize with some hero or champion whose cause is manifestly supported by some lesser god. Righteousness is not always clothed in robes of beauty, and the most deadly poison may be sweet to the taste. But although the prevailing tone is sad, there are often humorous incidents, bits of fun and jocularity; the ridiculous and the incongruous are present still, even though our life be projected into the regions of the gods.

Thought is the substance out of which the epic is made. To be sure, the epic is great poetry, and so fine art. Its purpose is to move us by bringing to us intense experience through the imagination.

The lyrist may sing out of the fulness of his heart; he need not be well informed. But the epic is possible only when there is fulness of knowledge. If we pick up any of the great epics and read, we soon become aware of how little we know and of how utterly impossible it is to understand the poem with our meagre equipment. Somehow we must inform ourselves either through notes or some other means if we would arrive at a reasonable understanding.

The epic deals with life as expressed in the larger aspects of history, legend, and myth. It represents life as seen through philosophic systems, theologies, and beliefs. The epic poet must have lived with his material until it has become second nature with him and he is at ease in a world of knowledge and thought made significant through beauty and familiarity. In the folk-epic this knowledge and wisdom may be only folk-lore, but folk-lore represents the intellectual achievement of the race refined and mellowed with age. So the later and more individual epic poet must have great store of learning. How much knowledge went into the making of "Paradise Lost" one first realizes as one sets oneself honestly to work to fathom its meaning. Much of the pleasure in epic poetry comes with the consciousness of power, mastery of wide realms of

knowledge, and systematic ordering of many facts and details. The epic is never the work of a novice. It represents the fulness of the meaning of life in the light of mature judgment and the wisdom of ages.

The style of the epic is majestic and yet simple. The plan is that of a grand structure executed with simplicity and regularity of detail. It is a long story leisurely told to those already familiar with the matter, and eager only for the fresh excitement the manner of the singer may inspire. The rhythm is fixed, native to the language, and, like the language, peculiar to the race whose life it expresses. The music quality of epic style cannot be overemphasized. For primarily at least the epic was addressed to the ear and not to the eye; it was composed for recitation, and relied for effect on all the weird and subtle charms the spoken word is capable of working on the human heart. Usually the narrator moves on regularly from incident to incident, from character to character, with an evenness of utterance that at times becomes monotonous. There is no attempt at diversification; even the characters are for the most part indistinguishable in manner of speech. Much of the matter is given to the characters as speeches, but the style is never very noticeably different.

Epic style is especially marked by long similes. It is through simile and direct description that the picture element is brought into the poem. The simile serves, too, to enforce the consciousness of destiny by relating human life through illustration and analogy to the other forces at play about us. Descriptive passages often serve to give setting for incidents and to provide, as it were, emotional overtones to accompany the action. The folk-epic is rich in epithet, but the characterization thus attempted is more generally restricted to physical characteristics — clothing, armor, or bodily peculiarities. The sentence structure usually is simple as in all narrative, but the order of words is frequently transposed to satisfy the requirements of rhythm.

In many ways the study of an epic is a more difficult undertaking than the study of a lyric or an essay. In the first place, the epic is a long poem and requires for its mastery sustained effort. It cannot be read at a sitting, and the many characters, incidents, and episodes must be kept in mind if we are in any satisfactory manner to appreciate the poem as a whole. Secondly, the epic is more highly intellectual than the lyric, or even the essay, and so requires a greater fund of knowledge on the part of the student. The young student is never equipped with this special knowl-

edge, and can acquire it only by most diligent attention and persistent labor. The supernatural machinery, especially of the folk-epic, often demands a knowledge of antiquities that involves a lifetime of study. And although much of this material is readily accessible in the form of reference books and books of critical research, yet the student incurs no end of difficulty in his effort to make it his own. Lastly, the imaginative experience of the epic is far more complex than in the shorter forms of literature. The poet sees the meaning of life through the intimate association of many elements and characteristics, using history and race rather than the individual and the moment. This the student must do also, if he wishes to know life as the epic interprets it.

Any study of the epic, then, should frankly face the difficult and cultivate the heroic spirit that the epic represents. An epic should be studied in its entirety, and not in the first and second books, as is so frequently the practice. To be sure, such fragmentary study may serve to introduce the tyro to epic style. He may get from it a notion of the rhythm, and of how the narrative is managed. He may even develop some appreciation of the spirit of the thing. But he cannot see life as the poet represents it through the poem as a whole; neither can he have the pleasure that

comes with the exercise of the imagination in the full interpretation of a great piece of creative art. It may not be possible for a large number of college students to have this pleasure in a high degree, and perhaps this is the reason why the epic is commonly studied only in parts. Perhaps, too, part of the reason is in the time necessary to make a complete study of an epic. Often it is not practical or at least expedient in regular school courses to devote to one piece of literature the time necessary for a careful study of a long epic.

For the kind of study I have in mind here, it seems to me to be better to select some shorter poem in epic style and matter than to deal with fragmentary parts of some longer work. I need hardly repeat that I am not speaking here of historical surveys, in which any slight attention to long pieces of literature may have its place. I am speaking of an introductory study that has for its aim a mastery of the various types of literature as forms of expression.

There are no short folk-epics. In English "Beowulf" is not really very long, but for the young student it has the disadvantages of a foreign language. College freshmen must read it in translation and, of course, miss the native rhythm and other linguistic qualities lost in translation. However, a good translation like Professor Gum-

mere's may serve very well until the student may read the original. But I have found it simpler, and perhaps more satisfactory, to start with something that can be used just as it was written.

Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum" is not strictly an epic, although it is epical. It is too short for a true epic, and some critics say it is too bookish. Just how long and how bookish an epic should be, I do not know. But the significance of the event used as subject-matter in "Sohrab and Rustum" is hardly far-reaching enough to warrant any interpretation in the light of destiny, and the characters involved are too few to give proper scope to the action. Furthermore, fate and the supernatural world, while felt as overshadowing elements, are hardly vivid enough for the true epic. By "bookish," I think the critics mean that the experience is brought to Arnold entirely through books, and not through the life and history of his own race and nation. Whether this criticism is just or not I am not prepared to say. However, I think there is a reasonable defense of Arnold's poem in the fact that books are as much a part of life as tradition, and that they serve in a large measure to make the whole world kin.

"Sohrab and Rustum," better than any other short English poem, is capable of giving us the quality of experience the epic represents. It has

the general characteristics of epic style, and of the English epic especially. It is iambic pentameter rhythm, full of long similes and descriptive passages; it has the formal speech manner of conversation, the martial setting, and the tendency to philosophize imaginatively. Its leading characters are well drawn, perhaps too well drawn for an epic, but so portrayed that our sympathy is divided, so that whatever the outcome we must still be sad. This, I believe, is true epic emotion. We rejoice in the victory, but rejoice in a mood that is at least half sorrow. It is as if we are witnesses of a struggle which we cannot decide, and while we submit to the arbitrament of fate or Providence, our sympathy for the lost cause is never weakened. We wish well to both sides, but only one can triumph. Even external nature seems to be torn by the struggle and troubled with divided sympathies. Reason must support the outcome of events and reconcile our feeling. All of this I think "Sohrab and Rustum" does, although it does not have the grand proportions of "Paradise Lost" or the "Iliad."

In our study we should at first read the poem through, giving ourselves up to the charm of style and story, allowing full and free play to emotion as the narrative proceeds, and pay only such heed to minor details as may at times be incidentally

necessary, as looking up the meaning and the pronunciation of words that may be new, or the structure of some difficult sentence. Matters of history and social philosophy need not at first concern us. When we have finished the reading of the poem, we should ask the general question: What does this mean?

In answering this question we should not be contented with generalities or mere spontaneous thrills. We must with ever fuller and fuller detail, with ever increasing knowledge of the history utilized, realize imaginatively what the poet has done. We must reconstruct not only the gross outline of his structure, but we must systematically master and harmoniously unify all of the details. This is no slight matter, and cannot be accomplished in a few moments nor in a few days. Epic experience is a matter of growth; the element of time is all-important. What we live from day to day must be systematically correlated to our sum of experience in order that we may approximate that fulness of knowledge, that breadth and intensity of feeling, that imaginative insight through which alone the epic point of view is possible.

Some critics are in the habit of using the term epic in a very general sense, including all kinds of narrative poetry. There is, to be sure, a consid-

erable body of narrative poetry that has epic quality; often we find marks of true epic style and faint flashes of epic emotion in poems that deal in part with epic themes. No doubt such poetry has a close relationship to the epic. It may represent a weak or decadent spirit still capable of noble vision but unable to hold for any length of time the vivid consciousness of destiny imaginatively interpreted, or to sustain the prolonged effort of epic composition. On the other hand, there is much narrative poetry that has more in common with fiction, the novel and story, than with the epic. It is more concerned with the lives and fate of individuals than of races or nations. It interprets life on small canvases, often inventing both characters and incidents to produce an almost infinite variety of effects.

To the former group belong poems like Layamon's "Brut," Barbour's "Bruce," the Cædmonian "Genesis" and "Exodus," the Christian poems of Cynewulf. To the latter belong poems like most of the lais and metrical romances, the narrative poems of Byron, Scott, and Longfellow. While there may be reason for including the former among the epics, to include the latter is indeed going very far afield. Many of these broken-down and mixed forms of narrative verse have had extraordinary vogue, and are repre-

sented by an enormous output of indifferent quality. But even where there seems to be a sufficiently large collection of like kind and merit to be considered a separate genre, it is hardly worth while to treat it as such in an elementary study like this.

There is, however, one type of narrative poem that must be given fuller consideration here — the popular ballad. Like the folk-epic, the popular ballad deals with subject-matter of great antiquity; it tells a story, and has a style peculiar to itself. The popular ballad differs from the epic in that it is short, condensed, and rapid in manner of narration. It is more personal than the epic, and usually the characters are not heroic. The epic and the ballad may at times make use of the same material, but the ballad treats incidents and episodes in the lives of individuals as complete units in themselves. The epic interprets life in a larger way by combining many of the smaller units in a related sequence through which the working of overruling powers becomes apparent.

This use of common material has led some critics to believe that the popular ballad and the folk-epic represent different stages in the development of a single literary form. Some hold that the epic is made out of older ballads; others, that ballads are the fragments of broken-down epics. Both or

neither of the theories may be true. The popular ballad is lyrical in tone and style. It is musical, repetitious, and often has a refrain. As the name suggests, it was used originally as the musical accompaniment to some form of dance, and was so constructed that it might be lengthened or shortened, and even altered in other ways, as change in names and places, to suit the needs of the moment.

It is usually customary to classify epic poetry in two distinct groups: the folk, or national, epic, and the epic of art, or the personal epic. While the folk-epics in the forms in which we now have them undoubtedly represent the work of some poet no longer known, yet they seem, too, to be made out of material of long and slow growth in which the race, tribe, or nation as a group played a very significant part. Generally speaking, they deal with stories and events of great antiquity, often being the only authority we have for the experiences or history related. Like the popular ballad, they often represent the social imagination at play among the scenes and happenings of an early or even primitive world. For the most part they are without date or definite authorship. To this class belong poems like the "Iliad," "Odyssey," "Beowulf," "The Cid," "The Kalevala," "Nibelungenlied," and perhaps some others.

The epic of art is a later production of poetry definitely composed by some individual poet. Often he uses the same kind of material as the folk-epic, but he weaves it together in a conscious, artistic manner. The "Paradise Lost" utilizes world-old material, but it did not take form through ages of growth. Milton gave it form and enlarged meaning. He found his model in the older epics, and shaped his material according to their patterns. Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Virgil's "Æneid" are specimens of the epic of art.

In English literature "Beowulf" is the only representative of the true folk-epic. The epic of art is variously represented, depending upon how much of the great library of narrative poetry is to be classed as epic. "Paradise Lost" is the one great epic of art in English. "Paradise Regained" belongs in the same group, but it is hardly in the same class. After this we might with reason mention the Cædmonian "Genesis" and "Exodus," the Christian poems of Cynewulf, Layamon's "Brut," Barbour's "Bruce." With less justice we might mention Spenser's "Faerie Queene," but even here we are getting far removed from true epic style and matter.

Later poets have occasionally touched the epic manner in their long poems. Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum" is a near-epic, but this poem has

been considered and discussed in earlier pages. In quite recent years Mr. Noyes has attempted prolonged composition in his poem "Drake," but whatever merits this poem may have, it is, to say the least, straining the meaning of words to call it an epic. The "Beowulf," then, with "Paradise Lost," "Paradise Regained," and perhaps "Sohrab and Rustum" are the best representatives of epic poetry in English.

CHAPTER VII

HOW THE NOVEL INTERPRETS LIFE

Like the epic, the novel is objective and concerned with telling a story. It has, however, very marked features that distinguish it from the epic. In the first place, the novel is written in the form of prose and not in the form of verse or poetry. To be sure, there are many narrative poems that cannot justly be classed with the epic, most noticeably the metrical romances. These, indeed, have much in common with the novel, and perhaps utilized the quality of experience that later went into the novel and the short story, and while it may be necessary and proper to include them in any study of the development of fiction, their peculiarities are too marked to warrant including them as representatives of the novel.

Furthermore, the novel differs from the epic in that it is not heroic. It deals with life as we ordinary men and women live it here, and it directs attention to individuals rather than to groups. We might say it bears about the same relation to

the epic as biography bears to history, or rather to the philosophy of history. As the epic interprets the meaning of life as its destiny is revealed through larger units in the history of race or nation, just so the novel expresses the significance of life as the larger units of individual experience shape themselves in the growth of character and soul. The epic generalizes, and submerges the individual in the mass; we are aware of him but he is not allowed to dominate. The novel particularizes; what the character thinks and feels is of the greatest importance, not because it is of any moment in human destiny, but because it is of significance to himself in his present circumstances.

The epic deals with history, myth, or legend, and invents details of character and incident only as needed to give vividness of impression to what might otherwise seem vague and unreal. But the actual sequence of events is seldom tampered with, the common beliefs are not disturbed, and the characters, while they may be heightened and vivified, retain their identity in the minds of the hearers or readers. The novel invents freely, and for this reason we have allowed the term to become closely synonymous, almost identical, in meaning with the word fiction. The common definition of fiction is to form, shape, invent, feign. Because of this invention and feigning, all

fiction, and the novel especially, has at times acquired a very uncomplimentary reputation. To the unimaginative, fiction has meant nothing but lies. They say these people never lived, these things never happened, there are even no such places as those where the scenes are laid, and to indulge in reading such false matter is to give one a wrong impression of life, and in the end perhaps render one incapable of right living.

The novel is invention, whether it be highly imaginative or only fanciful. The novelist is concerned with the realities of life, and pays little or no heed to the actual facts of experience. It is enough for him if his world of art is true to nature in both proportion and dimension, and he experiences no cause for uneasiness or alarm if the characters whose lives he so minutely portrays never lived, or perhaps never could live, in the actual world amid circumstances such as those with which he surrounds them. The laws of our actual world are operative in his fictitious world, and the truth is universal, even if the details of his creation have never been staged in history.

It is the mission of the novel — I speak only of the great works of art worthy of study — to enhance the meaning of life through vicarious experience. Most of us live our actual lives within very narrow horizons, and the adventuring spirit

in us is apt to feel the burden of confinement and to long for freer range. For the most part, the people about us in any stratum of society are commonplace, and their behavior is conventionalized. They are as we are; routine characterizes our business and our society, and day follows day with almost standardized monotony.

To be sure, there are fine spirits in any community, but the glory of the inner life is never paraded in the market-place, and but seldom is revealed in the dancing-hall or parlor. Imagination is our only sure way of retreat, and the novelist is like a great magician or good fairy who works some subtle charm to set the imagination free. He takes us to the high places of the world, as it were to the galleries of the social theatre, from which we may see and behold all manner of men and women busily engaged in the game of life, but under conditions that manifest the inner life of thought, feeling, and purpose, as well as the outer deed and action. It is our privilege to mingle with this fictitious society, even to identify ourselves with the characters and play their parts.

And so the novelist introduces us to a life of larger possibilities. He surrounds us with more varied and more interesting personalities than it may be our good fortune to know in actual life, and their subtly motivated behavior among chal-

lenging circumstances opens the hidden treasures of our nature and stimulates a lively response. Life in the novel makes us ask more questions, think more, feel more intensely, have clearer vision, dream happier dreams.

In addition to the common qualities of style that mark all literature, the novel utilizes three important elements, not peculiar to it alone but indispensable: plot, character, and setting. Through these as means of expression the novelist reveals to us the larger phases of his meaning of life. At first thought it may seem that these elements in the novel belong to subject-matter rather than to style, and by some critics they have been so treated. Since, however, in the last analysis, style cannot be dissociated from matter, there can be no great confusion if occasionally terms like these are allowed to cross. I doubt if any great novelist ever tells his story for the sole purpose of having us know his plot and characters. His aim is to move us with thought and feeling represented and inspired by these forms of expression. What was in the author's mind that moved him to construct a plot and create characters is his subject-matter, and while this cannot be dissociated from style, yet we may make distinction between them.

It is hard to define plot. There is such a wide range of difference among novels in this respect,

that it is almost impossible to get any clearly defined notion that can be applied to all. Webster defines plot as "the plan or main story of a literary composition, as a play, novel, romance, or poem, comprising a complication, or causally connected series, of motived incidents which are gradually unfolded, sometimes by unexpected means." This is general enough to include almost any kind of narrative composition, and in some cases might be applied to history or biography. In his admirable discussion of the subject, Professor Bliss Perry says that, to state it simply, we may understand by plot that which happens to the characters. This would include all narrative, no matter how inconsequential, or how slavishly the author adhered to actual incident and order. However, I think we do recognize a difference between fictitious narrative and history, and this difference, I believe, constitutes the essence of plot.

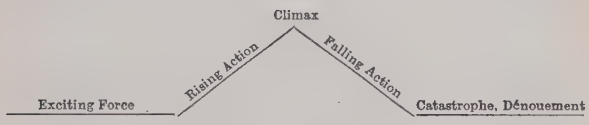
The events of history may be ordained to some purpose, but they are so numerous and so far from being concluded that our best guesses are never very convincing. Even when we think we have discerned the will of Providence manifested as destiny, our expression is likely to take the form of epic poetry and not of prose fiction. And in our study of individual lives we never know

enough of what goes on in the inner experiences of our subjects to give a clear causal relationship to their outward acts.

The master novelist orders these matters differently. He arranges his incidents to express a definite meaning. He chooses only what aids him and ignores the rest. He is free to eliminate from his story all irrelevant matter, such as is bound to creep into all of our actual every-day affairs, and so to bind together his motivated series of incidents that their cause-and-effect relationship is strikingly apparent. If he is concerned with a love plot, he ignores all business affairs except such as have a direct causal relationship to his theme. If he would portray the meaning of life through political experience, he ignores the family life of his characters, and even all affairs of state except what is absolutely necessary to elucidate the salient features of the truth he wishes to represent. This deliberate purposeful ordering of events differentiates fiction from history and becomes the chief distinguishing characteristic of plot in the novel.

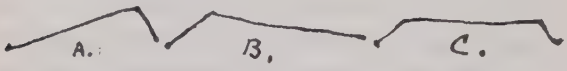
Some features are common to all plot. The action represented must have a beginning, rise to a highest point of tension, fall again to some state of final adjustment. Technically it is customary to designate the different stages of progression in

plot as the exciting force, rising action, climax, falling action, and catastrophe, or dénouement. Often, too, plot is represented diagrammatically as a pyramid about which the incidents may be arranged:

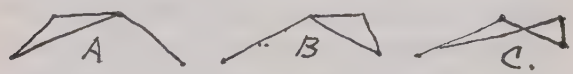


Ordinarily the exciting force is some incident or event in the life of the leading character that initiates a struggle against opposing forces. The struggle may be of almost any nature so long as it is within the scope of vital human interest and plausibility. Sometimes it is represented through incidents played on the outer stage of society; sometimes it is confined to the inner conflict of ideas and attitudes. The rising action represents the connected series of events through which the struggle becomes more complex, intensified, and the outcome less certain. The climax is the point of highest tension where one of the opposing forces begins to yield and the direction of subsequent action is determined. The falling action chronicles the various steps by which the story moves to its final close. The end may be catastrophic or light and happy.

The distribution of emphasis in plot may vary almost infinitely. The climax may be near the beginning or the close. Almost the whole of the story may be concerned with the rising or the falling action. The narrative and progression in either part may be swift or slow, crowded with incident or almost no incident at all, subjective or objective in nature. Even the climax may be the major part of the theme, and the story may resolve itself into telling how the crisis was determined. We may represent these three kinds of plot diagrammatically as follows:



The plot need not be simple; often it is complex, consisting of a main plot and a subordinate plot or plots. It may even consist of two plots of almost equal importance. The composite type may be represented as follows:



Many other combinations may be used. However constructed, the plot must be unified as well as definitely and consistently motivated.

The unity of plot and characters is inviolable, each being in turn both cause and effect of the

other. Without the characters there could be no plot, and without the plot the characters would not be what they are. In general, the characters in the novel must satisfy one requirement: they must be vividly conceived and interesting. Plot alone, or even setting, may be sufficient to carry us through a short story, but we are not likely to sustain interest in a story of the proportions of a novel if the people are uninteresting and wooden. If the characters in themselves are unimpressive, we do not care what happens to them or what becomes of them.

With this one restriction, the novelist has free range. His characters need not be heroic, as in the epic. They need not belong to any particular social class. The milkmaid and the plumber are as good as a duchess and a king, provided they are interesting people in whose lives incidents are so plotted that significant truths of human relations in this world are impressively revealed. Neither is there any limit to the number of characters a novelist may use. He may work out his idea with only a few people, as in "The Scarlet Letter" and "Joseph Vance," or he may use a half-hundred or more, as in some of the novels of Dickens or Thackeray. If the plot is simple and rigid, only a few characters are generally needed; but where the main plot is very loosely constructed and rein-

forced by several subplots crowded with incidents, many characters are necessary to weave the parts together in some kind of organic unity. The number of characters is determined, too, by the special meaning of life the novelist would bring home to us. If he is looking at life from the social point of view, he will need more characters to provide the society required by his theme than he will need if he is concerned only with the inner conscience of one or at most a few people.

The treatment of character in the novel varies, but generally we may speak of it as dynamic or static. That is, affairs may be so ordered that the characters are changed through the progress of the story, or they may be allowed to remain the same throughout the story. In "Vanity Fair" we have the static type of character. Becky, Amelia, George, Joseph are not different at the close of the story from what they were at the beginning. Many interesting things have happened, but they have wrought no substantial changes in the people who took part in them.

On the other hand, Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, in "The Scarlet Letter," are not the same at the beginning and the end of the story. Suffering and repentance have changed them, much after the manner of changing iron into steel by tempering. To be sure, the dynamic treatment

of character brings out only what was potentially present all the while, but without the story we never should have been aware of it. It shows us what people may become in life, while the static way of using character shows us what people do. When the purpose of the author is to move us in some way by exhibiting events in such a manner that the incongruity, baseness, nobility, or justice of life becomes apparent, he usually takes a wide span of time and space and makes use of many characters. If he would lead us into the unfolding possibilities of character, he confines his interests to a very few people intimately associated in events represented on a narrow stage.

Characterization may be analytical or dramatic. The author may choose to analyze his characters and tell us all about them, how they look, what they think, their emotions, and the motives that control their actions. We are never allowed free inference. At every stage of the story the author prepares us for the effect events are likely to have on the characters, and is careful to see that the effect is noted. He fills up much of the narrative with his own purposeful reflections. On the other hand, he may present his characters dramatically. He may set them going, as it were, and never comment on them or their actions in person. We must get our notion of the characters from what

they do and say, not from anything the author chooses to tell us about them.

The latter type of characterization is likely to make greater use of conversation than the former type. From what the characters say to one another we can infer what they think and feel, and what inner states of mind have brought about the things said. Often they tell one another their plans and purposes, and these in turn motivate the action. Often, too, the characters in conversation or soliloquy analyze one another. Almost any device is used to keep the author from taking the stage in person.

Conversation makes up a large part of many, perhaps most, novels and is always a delicate matter to handle. The question is not only what should the characters talk about, but also what may they talk about. In answer to the first, we may say, finally, that they must not be allowed to do any talking except as it advances the plot or develops character. But the degree of relevancy cannot be definitely determined. If the purpose of the author is to represent life so that its humor becomes clearly apparent, then almost anything funny that the characters may do or say is relevant to the theme. Sometimes, too, conversation is a means of local color, and gives a tone of reality to the whole story.

Generally speaking, the setting of a novel means the time and place, the surroundings, in which what goes on is represented to have taken place. The truths of life and human nature are not equally apparent at all times and in all places. Often what we really are is discernible only as we see ourselves against a special or peculiar social background. Men behave differently among different circumstances, and no one environment, historical or geographical, can bring out many of the possibilities of human life. The novelist never pretends to exhibit life completely; so he chooses the setting that harmonizes with his theme.

The straight-laced puritanical society of old New England was especially fitted to provide conditions under which moral sensitiveness such as worked in Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale could be developed. Such a story would seem highly improbable if set in the Middle West of nineteen-twenty. George Eliot lays the scene of "Silas Marner" in a remote district of England among simple, superstitious people; even the gentlefolk are naïve; otherwise the primitive but wholesome sentiments that pervade the story could not convincingly impress us. "Oliver Twist" is a reality in the London of the eighteen-thirties, but could be hardly more than fanciful in Chicago of to-day. Uncas and Natty Bumpo are said

to be misrepresentations even in Cooper's setting; yet I believe most of us are willing to accept them, simply because they harmonize with what is around them, even if historically they are somewhat contrary to fact.

This represents the gross influence of setting in fiction. But the novelist often uses setting for more delicate effects. Sometimes he emphasizes the hour of day or season of the year, the beauty or dreariness of landscape, the mood of sky or weather, so that these in themselves foreshadow the state of mind in his characters. He prepares the stage of nature to harmonize with the human action he wishes to represent. Hardy and Meredith are full of this kind of thing. James Lane Allen, among recent American novelists, uses it with charming success. The descriptions of nature, the picture element in their stories, in a large measure arouse in us the proper quality of feeling to harmonize with the inner working of the minds of the characters. As the whole story is appropriately set in time and place, so each mood and incident of character and plot are provided with a sympathetic background in nature.

Plot, characters, and setting are the means by which the novelist or story-writer expresses the meaning of life as he experiences it. But he does not always make equal use of these means. The nature of his theme will determine the relative

prominence or emphasis to be given to the various elements of his art. He may wish to delight us with the anxious uneasiness of suspense or with the novelty of being ushered through a labyrinthian maze of connected incidents and events. If so, his chief concern is plot, and character and setting are subordinated to the limits of necessity.

On the other hand, he may purpose only to introduce us to interesting people. Whatever our individual philosophies may be, I think we all must admit that the worth of character depends upon what people are, not upon what they do. If the novelist would move us by bringing around us people in whom certain human traits and qualities are very evident, he is busy primarily with characters. His story may have the thinnest kind of plot, and the setting may be of the drabbest drab. Again he may seek to win us through the glamour of mood, and he proceeds to weave a spell of enchantment around us through the charm and mystery of setting. In the greatest novels, that interpret life through wide sweeps and penetrating depth of imagination, these elements are proportionally blended and harmonized. But below the highest art of fiction lesser themes become the instruments of inspiration, and their expression is often executed through simpler, perhaps less symmetrical, workmanship.

Like any other type of literature, the novel may

be interesting primarily because of style. The story-writer is very free in this respect. There are no requirements to limit his diction or restrict the nature of his sentences and paragraphs. The music of language, tone-quality and rhythm, are as effective as in poetry. Figurative expression with its charm of picture and copious suggestion of ideas may enrich the pages of the novel in the same manner as it does the familiar essay.

The heaviness of Henry James is not always due to greatness of ideas. Very often it is the result of ponderous style. His massive sentences, laboriously constructed out of formidable combinations of words, are likely to become depressing and discouraging, especially when all of our labor of rereading is rewarded with only a very ordinary observation or commonplace thought. Walter Pater, too, wrote a style that attracts much attention; so much at times that it loses its meaning. With writers like Stevenson, and Hardy at times, the style charms, no matter what it is they would say. Descriptive passages in Hardy, always in harmony of mood with the story, yet at times engage our attention by sheer beauty of style. Language in itself is a delightful experience, and when artistically executed it attracts us and pleases us in story as well as in song.

But in fiction, perhaps, that style is best which

is most neutral. If the chief business of the novelist is to tell a story about interesting people, he should not permit his own attention or that of his readers to wander from his theme amid the bewitching mazes of rhetoric. If he would bring to his readers a clear notion of life as it plays in the hearts of lovers walking alone in the moonlight, he should not become so devoted to his moonlight that he forgets his lovers. Yet all of the instruments and facilities of language are at his command. The choice and ordering of words are without restriction whether he writes in person or in character. To be sure, his characters must be true to type in speech as well as in bearing and action. The yokel may not speak like the society beau nor the simpleton like the philosopher. Beyond this there is no law to govern his practice. Whether his characters talk much or little is no matter so long as he keeps them before us and the story goes on. In person he may write as he chooses. His sentences may be simple and his diction easy, or he may entertain us through a willing search for his meaning among complexity and strangeness. So long as the story holds attention, the manner of telling it is of little moment.

The novel, like all other objective literature, is a creation of the imagination. Even the most aus-

tere realist cannot free himself from the influence of imagination in his portrayal of human character and action. The photographer may be able to copy and reproduce his object with greater exactitude of proportion and detail than the painter, but even the photographer must rely on imagination to make the most of his picture. In the first place, his instrument has very decisive limitations in focal range and sensitiveness to light and color. Furthermore, it can act but when and where the operator chooses. He determines the point of view, and as far as possible the quality and quantity of light. In other words, he tries in so far as is possible with his instruments to show us what is in his mind rather than what exists independent of him. He controls his performance and manipulates his instruments so that the imaginative ideal in his conception of what is before him may dominate the picture. Beauty or ugliness will characterize his model according as he chooses to represent it. So realism in fiction reflects the author's ideals. We discern the author's world of beauty, truth, and order through what he represents as ugly, false, and chaotic. He must assume some point of view, and his reflections indicate the ideal world in whose light and shadow he would present the world as it is.

So the novel of whatever class, from extreme

realism to extreme idealism, represents the same quality of mental experience. It presents characters socially active in such a way that significant characteristics of life and human nature become apparent. The characters and incidents of plot are provided and organized by the author for some definite implied purpose. Whether he selects his material from actual history or from imaginative suggestion, the process is the same. In the first case, he takes from actual life what corresponds to his ideal images; in the second, he just vivifies and objectifies his images. In any type of novel he selects only what his pattern approves. The realist shows us what he sees in life; the idealist what he sees through life. The actual is only the suggestive medium on which the imagination works. Absolute reproduction of the actual, even if it were possible, would not be art.

We have seen before how plot in fiction differs from history. It is more organically unified and decisively motivated. This is done in accordance with whatever notions of law and order the fiction-writer has been able to discover in the universe. In the actual world he may have found only the most fragmentary suggestions of his principles, and in history he may not be able to find incidents to illustrate his truths. Furthermore, in actual life character and incident may be true enough,

but they do not come together, and so the reaction desired is not demonstrable through facts.

The novelist brings together any kind of people he chooses in any plausible circumstances, and has them behave in thought and action according to such principles and laws as he has found exemplified or suggested in life as he has known it. The characters, like the incidents and laws of plot, are imaginatively conceived. They are not pieces of patchwork laboriously constructed in the shop or laboratory. They are born alive organically intact. Such people may never have lived in the actual world any more than the incidents and events may have happened; it may not be possible for such people to be born in the actual world; but they are of the nature and essence of man conceived according to his pattern. In principles and law the imaginative world of the novelist must correspond to the actual world, but it transcends the actual, and demonstrates theoretically and artistically what is not actually practicable.

The novelist is not always endowed with imagination equal to his needs. We say his work is not true to life. We do not mean that the counterpart or parallel of his creation cannot be produced in actual life, but we mean his laws and principles are false. The artist lacked imagination to pene-

trate the facts and find the truth through them. He has made a crazy-quilt because he lacked the power of organic design. His characters are lifeless, fanciful combinations of irreconcilable features, and their behavior is hardly more than an absurd travesty of human conduct. To be sure, such work is not art, or not art of a very fine quality; however, it is produced in great quantities and voraciously read and supported by a large but unimaginative public.

This means that in anything so closely related to life as literature we find every grade of quality from the poorest and crudest to the very best and highest. The producers vary as the consumers. It does not mean that there is no final standard in fiction, that relatively speaking one novel is as good as another. There is no comparison between the cheap love-stories of The Duchess or Laura Jean Libbey and the novels of George Eliot, Hawthorne, Scott, Thackeray, and Jane Austen. Browning's Caliban may make gourd mash and eat it with great gusto, but gourds are not, therefore, as good food as oranges. That is the best imagination which can discover truth through facts, and the greater the number of facts used the more significant the truth is likely to be. The student of fiction must carefully consider what the novelist has allowed his imagination to

work on and with what result. To accept without discrimination shows no higher imaginative experience than that of the poorest authors we read.

In addition to the thought that figures in the conception of plot and characters through which the novelist constructs his world, he has two ways of providing a thought accompaniment for his story. He may philosophize in person, or he may supply what is necessary in the conversation and meditation of his characters. Both methods are used by all novelists of importance, but the proportion varies. How much the author should attempt to control our thinking directly is a debatable question. Critics are agreed that he should exercise great restraint, and refrain from being overanxious or solicitous about the reader's thought. The story in itself should suggest the thought necessary and appropriate for complete understanding. However, most good novels do have some ideas presented in the way of comment by the author, often becoming didactic in tone and effect.

The characters, of course, may say or think anything that will in any way provide the proper intellectual atmosphere for the story, the only restriction being that the characters must remain intellectually consistent and the thought at all

times must be in harmony with incident, mood, and setting. We should hardly tolerate a baseball fan preaching politics at a world-series game, or a society belle meditating on the doctrine of original sin while she is undergoing a fitting by her dressmaker. But whatever is in keeping with the story the characters may think and speak. However expressed, the thought in a novel must be thoroughly comprehended by the student, both in its relation to the imaginative world in which it occurs and through this in the actual and ideal experiences of men.

The emotional element in the novel is distributed over a wide range of variety and intensity, and appeals to the reader in many ways. Style in the novel, as in all other literature, may move us by sheer beauty of words and felicitous phrasing —tone-color and the subtle bringing together of images in figurative expressions, the beauty of picture in descriptive passages, the harmony of thought and ideal setting. Symmetry and proportion in the construction of plot, the ordering of events, and the imaginative ideal that manifests itself through them and controls them, arouse in us all degrees of feeling from simple admiration to sublimity and reverence.

The novelist introduces us to characters who affect us much as people do in the actual world.

Some we love, others we hate, and toward the rest we have all shades of feeling that come between. We sympathize with them as we do with our neighbors and the members of our families; we enter into their joys and sorrows; we share their gladness, their pain and suffering. Furthermore, our feeling is stirred by what the characters do, by what they say, and by what happens to them. We are with them in the closet when they pray, and we follow them in the world of action, of accident, of fortune, of Providence, and of fate. All of this is under the control of the author, who orders his world and presents it as he will.

No doubt the bane of novel-reading is cheap sentimentality. Feeling is more spontaneous, more involuntary, than thought, and so it is easy for the novel-reader to let himself go. The novel ushers one into a new world especially designed to stimulate feeling. The heightened literary style is more suggestive in beauty of diction and imagery than is the language of ordinary life, and the concentrated form of plot and character is more appealing. It is not necessary to think in order to be entertained or amused by many novels, and the ordinary reader is not inclined to do more than is required.

However, the careful student analyzes his feelings and tries to account for them. He con-

sciously practises the most exact discrimination between the sensuous and the emotional, and he ever tries to maintain a just propriety in the nature and degree of feeling relative to its exciting cause. If he laughs, there must be sufficient reason for mirth; and if he cries, there must be due cause for tears. He never approves the straining of a situation for the sole purpose of arousing a shallow flow of light sentiment. Neither will he tolerate a misstatement of fact or a false conception of truth in order that the emotional tension may be increased. The world of fiction must be both imaginative and rational. Intelligence may at times give up the leading rôle to feeling, but it may not leave the stage entirely without risk of confusion and riot. The student must keep tab on his moods, and at every important stage of the story he must ask himself seriously if his reaction is justified by the circumstances.

To summarize, we may say the novel belongs to the class of literature generally spoken of as objective. The novelist tries to awaken in the reader a consciousness of the meaning of life, not by telling him directly what he would have him think and feel, but by introducing him to a carefully selected and organized society especially planned to provoke a desired reaction in the reader. Life has many meanings, and the novelist

may imagine his world to produce almost any effect. He may wish to make us keenly aware of the foibles and incongruities of human nature and human behavior, and so he places us in the midst of society calculated to stimulate our sense of humor or urge us to satiric reaction. He may wish to throw over us the bewitching spell of adventure or the glamour of romance, and he leads us along the ways of uncertainty, of daring and suspense, or into the pleasant places of extravagant beauty and fanciful sentiment.

Plot, characters, and setting are the elements out of which the novelist creates his world, and he invents freely such material as may be necessary to achieve his purpose. He informs us through the revelation of truth in plot and character and by addressing us directly in person or through the characters. He moves us through the general properties of style, but more especially by the people to whom he introduces us and by what they do and say. Imagination is exercised not only in mastering the incidents and details in all the elements of the story, but also in unifying the work as a whole. The student must be careful to reinstate the whole experience of the artist, and to permit only proportional indulgence in any form of experience the novel may excite. He must carefully weigh the justice and validity of the

ideas utilized by the artist, even testing them in the light of such inferences and deductions as may be logically plausible, and very especially must he be on guard against the superficial sentimentality through which the lesser novels are likely to make their moving appeal to the reader.

Fiction and story in both poetry and prose are very old, but the novel considered in the strictest sense is very modern. By common consent Richardson is acknowledged to have introduced the modern English novel with the publication of "Pamela" in 1740, and to some authorities this event marks the beginning of the novel in general. To be sure, the elements out of which Richardson constructed his book had seen much service in English and other European languages in the mediæval prose romances — fantastic stories of adventure and love — and in the novella — prose stories of contemporary manners.

During the later centuries of the mediæval period these types of story were copiously produced on the Continent, especially in Italy and France. During the sixteenth century many of these stories were translated into English, and furnished material for the great dramatists as well as suggestive models for writers like Sidney, Lyly, and Nash who cared to try their hand at prose narrative. During the seventeenth cen-

tury and the early decades of the eighteenth century some progress was made in the way of plot construction in the imitations of romances, but more especially in the stories of roguery and adventure. The creation of characters, too, was steadily improving in the work of the character-writers, letter-writers, and biographers, but perhaps more decisively in the works of Bunyan and the early eighteenth-century essayists. Defoe, perhaps, in "Robinson Crusoe," succeeded best in giving a sense of reality to his imaginary story and a fair degree of individuality to his characters.

Richardson told his story in the form of letters, but two years later, 1742, Fielding published his first novel, "Joseph Andrews," written in straightforward narrative style. From this time on to the present the novel has been steadily written, and by different authors has undergone marked variations of type. In the early nineteenth century Scott developed the historical novel. Later in the same century Eliot and Meredith wrote the psychological novel. At different times the novel has been utilized for specific purposes of education and reform.

Development in the novel has been more in the nature of experience utilized as subject-matter than in artistic workmanship. It has extended

its range until almost every phase of human interest and experience is brought within its scope, but it would be difficult indeed to make out a case in defense of the superiority of the best novels of to-day over the novels of Richardson and Fielding. Generally speaking, the tendency has been for the novel to become shorter, with a plot more decisively motivated, and incidents more discriminately selected and more rigidly unified. In the treatment of setting, too, especially in the matter of moods, there seems to be a closer sympathy between nature and human nature, a subtler harmony of feeling and natural surrounding in the later than in the early novels. But in characterization there is no decided change or improvement from decade to decade or from century to century. Here the difference is rather among authors, or works by the same author, than among historic periods. One author may do better characterization than another, but the same cannot be said of any period in the history of the novel. So while the novel may be said to have changed, it can hardly be said to have improved.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING THE SHORT STORY

In the most general sense the term short story may be understood to include all kinds of narrative writing of moderate length. Story-telling or story-writing is a very old art, and has been practised in many ways for many purposes. The story is always a very effective means of entertainment, and because of this it has been widely used as an appropriate method of instructive illustration. So we have an almost infinite variety of stories of moderate length written in both forms of prose and verse, and constructed to serve as many different needs. To be sure, much of this story material is not literature, but a great deal of it is; yet it is of such a miscellaneous character that it cannot be considered together as a separate type or genre. There is nothing definite as to length; there are no common restrictions as to form and construction; there is nothing specific in the material used nor in the ends it is made to serve. There are indeed groups of stories that may be classed together, as the tale, the lai, the fabliau,

but these are hardly important enough to be treated as distinct types of literature.

But just as the modern novel developed from the older long narratives, so the modern short story has developed from the old stories of moderate length. In this narrower use of the term the short story is more recent than the novel, and by common agreement of critics is said to have had its beginning during the second quarter of the last century in the stories of Poe and Hawthorne in this country, and in the stories of Gautier and Mérimée in France. These writers began publishing stories about the same time, but the distinction of being first is usually given to Poe, and certainly Poe must be accredited with being the first to have a clear notion of what he was trying to do and a definite theory of how the thing should be done. Poe first fixed the approximate length of the short story, stated definitely what the aim of the story-writer should be, and gave directions how he should go about his work.

In the well-known essay on Hawthorne's "Tales," Poe says:

> The tale proper, in my opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer without hesitation: in the com-

position of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And without unity of impression the deepest effects cannot be brought about. . . .

Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius — should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion — I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from an half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from totality. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses modify, annul, or counteract in a greater or less degree the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences — resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents — he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel.

Here Poe unmistakably defines for us the nature of the modern short story as he tried to write it, and as Hawthorne succeeded in writing it, perhaps without definitely defining for himself exactly what the nature of his composition should be. As Poe conceived the short story it is a prose narrative of such a length that it can be read at a single sitting — not to exceed two hours — and so constructed that it makes a single unified impression. It is interesting to note here that Poe thought about the short story in much the same manner as he thought about a poem, and that he assigned to the short poem and the short story respectively the first and second places of importance in the realm of literary art.

Poe was a poet as well as a story-writer, but his poetic genius was strictly lyrical. He could not write a long poem, and for this reason he considered the long poem a paradox. With equal assurance it might be said that Poe could not write a novel. By nature he was moody. Within the limits of mood the special genius of Poe was equal to almost anything, but he lacked the power of sustained effort and of prolonging or reinstating moods and states of mind so necessary for the execution of long pieces of literature. With Poe the artistic experience was always "impulsive, vivid, emphatic, and soon over." This is the kind of experience that goes into the making of lyric poetry, and when the manner of expression takes on the form of prose narrative this is the kind of experience that gives us the short story.

In the same essay from which I have quoted, Poe makes clear certain advantages which the short story has over the lyric poem. The experience that goes into the story is never quite so intense as that of the poem, but it has greater amplitude. In his own words he states the difference thus:

> The field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a tableland of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere

poem. The products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression (the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic, or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm.

That Poe was right in his conception of the short story as the expression of a single mood akin to the lyric, but of wider range in the nature of experience that may be utilized, is supported by the work of the best short-story writers as well as by the judgment of the most trustworthy critics. Professor Brander Matthews says, in his little book "The Philosophy of the Short-Story": "The writer of Short-stories must be concise, and compression, a vigorous compression, is essential. For him, more than for any one else, the half is more than the whole. Again, the novelist may be commonplace, he may bend his best energies to the photographic reproduction of the actual; if he show us a cross-section of real life we are content; but the writer of Short-stories must have originality, and ingenuity. . . . In fact, it may be said that no one has ever succeeded as a writer of Short-stories who had not ingenuity, originality, and compression."

By originality as used here I think we must understand not only that the story-writer must make his story out of something that is his own, but it must also be the result of some special unique mood. For this he must exercise ingenuity and compression: ingenuity in discovering in his experience what is peculiar to the mood he would represent, and skill in extracting this from all extraneous matter; compression that the experience may come to the reader with the greatest possible intensity.

In a letter of Stevenson to Sidney Colvin he writes about the same thing in the following manner:

> I have just interrupted my letter and read through the chapter of the "High Woods" that is written, a chapter and a bit, some sixteen pages, really very fetching, but what do you wish? the story is so wilful, so steep, so silly — it's a hallucination I have outlived, and yet I never did a better piece of work, horrid, and pleasing, and extraordinarily true; it's sixteen pages of the South Sea; their essence. What am I to do? Lose this little gem — for I'll be bold, and that's what I think of it — or go on with the rest, which I don't believe in and don't like, and which can never make aught but a silly yarn? Make another end of it? Ah, yes, but that's not the way I write; the whole tale is implied; I never use an effect when I can help it, unless it prepares the effects that are to follow; that's what a story consists in. To make another end, that is to make the beginning all wrong. The dénouement of a long story is nothing; it is just a "full close," which

you could approach and accompany as you please — it is a coda, not an essential member of the rhythm; but the body and end of a short story is bone of the bone and blood of the blood of the beginning.

Here Stevenson speaks of the severe restriction of the short story to one peculiar mood. "The whole tale is implied"; conceived as a unit, colored by a single passion or emotion. Any shifting of mental focus, any variation in the quality of feeling, and the effect of the story is lost. There can be but one ending to a story, and this is implied in the beginning. To change the ending means giving up the story.

By way of advice to the young story-writer, Stevenson says again:

Let him choose a motive, whether of character or passion; carefully construct his plot so that every incident is an illustration of the motive, and every property employed shall bear to it a near relation of congruity or contrast; . . . suffer not his style to flag below the level of the argument; pitch the key of conversation, not with any thought of how men talk in parlors, but with a single eye to the degree of passion he may be called on to express; and allow neither himself in the narrative nor any character in the course of the dialogue, to utter one sentence that is not part and parcel of the business of the story or the discussion of the problem involved.

This singleness of mood that constitutes the very essence of the modern short story, and the

"originality, ingenuity, and compression" that characterize its style and construction, may be abundantly illustrated from the work of the best short-story writers. We might select almost any of the stories of Hawthorne and Poe; for, however unlike the stories of these writers may be, they are alike in this: they represent a single mood; that is, a state of mind dominated by a single quality of feeling that gives color and tone to the experience it unifies. It may be a mood of bewilderment and suspense as we are led through the intricate mazes of solving a mystery, as in "The Gold Bug"; or it may be a mood of terror as we are made to suffer the agonies of torture in "The Pit and the Pendulum." With Hawthorne it may be a feeling of moral anxiety, a mingling of sympathy and guilt, in "The Birthmark," as we watch one haunted with a passion for perfection deliberately destroy the beauty and loveliness that God and nature had given; or, as in "The Ambitious Guest," we may be moved to breathless awe at the calamitous uncertainty of human ambition. Everywhere and always there is a unique situation, or novel set of circumstances ingeniously conceived and executed with the utmost compression to insure the desired degree of intensity of effect.

The originality and ingenuity of the story-

writer are admirably illustrated in Stevenson's "Markheim" and in "The Belled Buzzard" by Irvin Cobb. The mood of both stories is the same, the restless gnawing uneasiness of the guilty accusing conscience of the murderer. But how different are the situations chosen, and with what marvellous skill of invention does each author provide a different set of machinery to work his effect! With Stevenson it is Christmas Day, the old shop, the crabbed, suspicious dealer, the mirror, the imaginary figure that comes to converse with the murderer, and the sudden resolve of the murderer to give himself up to the police at the end of the story. With Irvin Cobb it is the loathsome swamp, the calculating, taciturn, self-approving old farmer, the hot days of Southern summer, the unique figure of the Belled Buzzard, and the mad confession at the inquest scene when the old man hears the negro babe jingle a cow-bell. The stories have nothing in common except the mood, and yet each works out the same desired effect.

The severe compression of the short story is admirably illustrated in "Humouresque," by Fannie Hurst. Here we have the whole life of a woman portrayed in three vivid scenes. The span of a whole generation is compressed within the compass of a single half-hour. There is, to be

sure, no very strong characterization; the interest of the author is not in any special person or persons. Her purpose is rather the creation of a mood in which we become aware of the anxious mingling of hope and joy and despair in a woman who longs to see her finest visions realized in her children, and who devotes her life to working out her aims amid the most thwarting circumstances. The whole thing is done in three swift scenes where not a word is written aside from the purpose.

Better still, perhaps, are some of the stories of Katharine Mansfield, for they have stronger characterization than the story just mentioned. I am thinking especially of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" and "Ma Parker." The latter is a little gem of only a few pages wherein we are made to love a most admirable old woman and to suffer with her all the concentrated misery of poverty, weariness, and baffled hope. Here indeed is compression, compression in the superlative degree.

To illustrate the wide range of experience that may be utilized in the short story, and the qualities of thought and feeling that, as Poe thought, are suitable for story but not for poetry, we might select some stories of playful humor, as "Little Gentleman," by Booth Tarkington, or "Hector," by H. C. Bunner, or "The Ransom of the Red

Chief," by O. Henry, or "Sonny's Christenin'," by Ruth McEnery Stuart. Humorous, but of a satirical nature, are "Xingu," by Edith Wharton, and "The Buckpasser," by Hugh McNair Kohler. It is impossible to conceive how material of this kind could become the subject-matter of poetry; at any rate, not of poetry as Poe defined it. Yet it is excellent story-matter, as these stories attest, and we might go on mentioning titles of excellent stories, all in different moods and worked out in unique manners, but almost any one can think of stories for illustration, and any of the good collections of recent stories will supply fresh material.

The chief aim of the short-story writer is to entertain. He is not concerned with giving us an interpretation of life, and if he has a philosophy of his own, it is seldom evident in his stories. He would enrich life for us by bringing to us short periods of intensified experience. There is almost no limit in range to the nature of experience he may use. Anything from the simplest humor to the highest tension of sublime emotion or the suspense of intricate reasoning in the solution of plots of mystery will serve his purpose. In the language of Wilkie Collins, it is his privilege to make use of any material or any device that will "Make 'em laugh; make 'em cry; make 'em wait."

To be sure, the artistic short story always has

some power of instruction. All fine art is didactic; if in no other sense, then certainly in this: it brings to those who fully appreciate it a clear consciousness of the joy and satisfaction that come with the finest quality of human experience. Indeed, the best stories do not teach formally by precept and application. We all are familiar with Stevenson's little prayer beginning "May I never tack a moral to a story," but in spite of this the story has some power of guidance and correction.

I said above that the story has always been used to illustrate truth and doctrine. There is no more powerful way to exemplify right conduct or fitting behavior, and the modern short story has been used for this purpose in the same manner as the parable and animal stories of other times. Hale's "The Man Without a Country" certainly belongs in this class. Perhaps more specifically didactic are "T. B.," by Fannie Hurst, "Zelig," by Benjamin Rosenblatt, and "The Bounty-Jumper," by Mary Synon. This last story, besides being a powerful piece of teaching with reference to patriotism and true moral worth, is also an example of character development, a feat not easily accomplished within the limits of a short story. Although these stories were intended to teach, they are not therefore less artistic or less entertaining.

The short story works its effect by showing us a bit of life carefully calculated to arouse the quality and degree of experience desired. Some striking situation, a unique character, a bit of absurd or incongruous behavior, the subtle untangling of events in some puzzling mystery, the natural charm of romantic scenery and adventure, the peculiarities of living in out-of-the-way places, or other strata of society — anything that may excite agreeable intellectual activity or pleasurable feeling will serve as raw material for the story-writer's art.

The short story is composed of the same elements that go into the making of a novel — plot, character, and setting — but in the short story these elements must be treated in a decidedly different manner. Almost everything that is used in the novel may be of use in the story, but it must be compressed and refined so that its peculiar properties, whatever they may be, are strengthened and its features sharpened in outline and more highly colored.

In the most general sense plot is essential in a novel, but it need not be simple or well constructed. The loosest series of events will do, if they are held together by interesting characters, or by significant comment of the author as he relates them. This is true of some of the novels

of Thackeray, especially of "Vanity Fair" and "The Newcomes," and among recent novels "Joseph Vance," by De Morgan, is a case in point. Furthermore, the novelist need not be in a hurry; he may take all the time he needs to get started, and he need not proceed according to schedule. He may even halt the story for a time and do something else, if he has a mind to it, without serious damage to the effect of his work as a whole. Illustrations of this may be found in the long slow beginnings of many of Scott's novels and in the opening chapters of the different books of "Tom Jones." Moreover, his plots need not be simple; he may compound them, or double and triple compound them, for that matter, if he is equal to the task. He is concerned with large units of life, and complexity or miscellaneousness is no barrier, if he can unify it in the end.

But, in the short story, plot may not be so treated. Here construction is everything, and nothing may be wasted. The short story is to have but one effect, and to this end everything must be chosen and arranged. What is done must be done quickly, and no extraneous matter is tolerated. No event may be chronicled, no incident related, unless it is vitally germane to the theme and well within range of the dominant emotion. Economy is necessary for intensity of impression,

and suggestion is often more effective than definite detailed account. What may be implied must never be stated. To the good short story there is always a point, and about this the whole plot must be planned and constructed. There seldom is time for a subplot, and any interruption of the main theme relaxes the emotional tension and weakens the effect of the story.

Characters are essential to the short story, as they are to the novel, but good characterization is not necessary. If the characters of a novel are lifeless and wooden, the novel is a poor novel. They need not be unique or extraordinary, they may even be commonplace, but they must be real and vividly conceived. But in the short story, unless character drawing is the primary purpose, the characters need not be sharply portrayed. Most of the stories thus far mentioned in this chapter are weak or indifferent in characterization. The stories of Katharine Mansfield are about the only exceptions, and they are character stories. She gives vividness and color to her characters by presenting them through a rapid succession of telling situations. The character story when well done, as in the cases just mentioned, is usually a masterpiece, but the examples are by no means plentiful. We can readily recall many characters from novels as real and individual as

people we have met, but when we try the same thing with the short story the number is, relatively, surprisingly small.

It is very difficult to do good character drawing within the limits of the short story. The artist must have that happy combination of faculties that makes it possible for him to discover the one distinguishing trait in character and personality, and to present this through a bit of vivid word-painting. The novelist has many trials; he may select many traits and present them through as many situations; if one does not take, perhaps another will. But with the short-story writer it is once or never. Bret Harte could do it, and his best stories always have memorable characters. John Oakhurst, Kentuck, and Tennessee's Partner are as real and vivid as almost any characters in the novel. A fine bit of character work may be found in a recent story by Olive Tilford Dargan, "Sam," in *The Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1924. I cannot recall any character in fiction that seems to me more real and individual. There is but one Sam, just as there is but one Micawber, or Becky Sharp, or Sam Weller. Sarah Orne Jewett, too, could do the thing occasionally, as in "Miss Esther's Guest"; and Mrs. Mary Wilkins Freeman, in "A New England Nun"; and Kipling at times, as Mulvaney in "The Courting

of Dinah Shadd"; others, of course, but the list is not long.

With setting the short story has much more to do. The peculiar atmosphere of some locality, stratum of society, class of industry or occupation may be given easily within the compass of a short story, and the singleness of impression desired lends itself well to this form of writing. Stories of local color are plentiful and may be found anywhere; books and magazines are full of them. This is the kind of story the women story-writers have revelled in. Among the best of these may be mentioned the New England stories of Miss Jewett and Mrs. Wilkins Freeman, the "Old Chester Tales," by Margaret Deland, the stories of Olive Schreiner, and more recently the very excellent story by Helen R. Martin, "The Conversion of Elviny."

But this kind of story is not by any means the special monopoly of women. Men have worked diligently in the same field. Among these may be mentioned the California stories of Bret Harte, "Old Creole Days," by George W. Cable, stories of Virginia, by Thomas Nelson Page, stories of Indiana, by Maurice Thompson, stories of the Middle West, by Hamlin Garland — but why go on? there is almost no end to this kind of thing. It is a kind of news; it is easy to write, and easy

to read, and usually quite well paid for. It is full of the humor of life and always welcome.

As a work of fine art the short story is always imaginative. It is imagination that finds story-matter among the miscellaneously jumbled masses of actual experience, and reconstructs it in compact form for story effect. The art of the short story consists in bringing together a special set of images — for the most part visual — to produce a single emotional effect. The success of the artist depends upon his choice of images, their vividness, and his facility in the use of words. Rich imagination provides an abundance of images to select from, and vividness assures a clear-cut picture. Without these, the short story is bound to fail.

Generally speaking, the short story has little to do with the ideal world. In this sense it is not creative; it has no vision; it is of the earth earthy. Its appeal is to all men, and it aims to entertain by introducing us to unique characters, by permitting us to breathe the atmosphere of strange or out-of-the-way places, by tantalizing us with suspense over the solution of some meaningless mystery or the sequence of insignificant events, by presenting incongruous situations or absurd behavior for the sake of humor or mere fun. It asks nothing of the reader but his hour of idle time.

Emotionally the short story has no restrictions;

its domain is the whole realm of human feelings. The only requirement is that it use them one at a time. According to Poe, the short story must be limited in length to the duration of a single emotional effect. This determines the mood, and when the mood is over, the story must be done. The quality of feeling and the degree of intensity is at the will of the author, limited only by his ability to give us pictures through words. Moreover, it cannot be said that the quality of feeling or emotion has anything to do with the value of the story. The best stories are not always those calculated to arouse the nobler emotions. Intensity is more effective than quality, degree of more value than kind. To be sure, the story-writer may not make his appeal to the baser elements of human nature. To do this would be to violate the principles of fine art, and no matter how intense such work might be, it would cease to be literature.

In the narrowest sense of the term the thought element of literature is reduced to a minimum in the short story. The short-story writer need not be a thinker. The novel usually reflects some philosophy of life of which it is an expression. Not so with the short story. Here it is not a matter of ideas, but of singleness of impression. There is no time for thought or meditation either on the

part of the author or of the characters in the story, except as it may aid in vivifying or intensifying the mood of the story. Of course thought has gone into the conception of the story and into its construction, but it has disappeared as such from the finished work. Everything has been done in the workshop, and nothing is allowed to remain in the finished work that might in any way distract the mind of the reader from the main purpose of the story.

In style the short-story writer is free. He may tell his story as best he can. However, the time at his disposal forces him to practise the utmost compression. He may not waste a single word, he may not use a word amiss. Everything must count. If a word can be made to do service for two words or for a phrase or sentence, so much the better. What can be suggested must not be formally related. Everything the author says in person as well as the conversation of his characters must be clear and to the point. Somehow the story-writer must have the gift of using words in such a way that they delight us although we are not conscious of them.

There is little to study in the short story. It is a form of art that renders its meaning easily. It deals with small units of experience, and its one aim is to represent them for us with swiftness,

vividness, and completeness. If the story is well done, there is nothing left to do. If it is not well done, it is a complete failure and drops out of the sphere of art. There is no effort to remember incidents, no bother about characters, no re-reading to gather missing details, no reforming of judgments. The thing is too short for all of this; it confines itself to a single impression in which all is fresh.

However, the careful student of literature finds much to think about in the short story. He will not be likely to miss its meaning, but he may enrich this by thought. In the first place, why should the author tell this story to me? If it was not intended for me, why should he tell it to anybody? Does the human mind delight in this kind of activity? How has the author managed to produce his effect? Are his means legitimate? Are they natural and in accord with what is probable? As in the case of the lyric, much may be done with the short story in a comparative way. Stories on the same or kindred themes may be read together and analyzed for differences in material and method. Then, too, the student should read stories of many kinds to cultivate as wide a range of experience as possible. Above all things, he should guard himself against becoming a short-story inebriate.

The short story at its best is a highly developed art, subtle and delicate in its charm, refining in the influence of its experience. At its worst it ceases to be art and its influence is harmful. It requires no special preparation or talent for its appreciation, and it has the power of pleasing without effort. Intense and vivid as its moods may be, they are short-lived, and the constant reader of short stories is in danger of losing the power of enjoying the sustained experience of the more complicated types of literature. The short story serves its best purpose as literary recreation, to be read and enjoyed in moments intervening between the serious study of bigger things. Often it is so produced by novelists and dramatists between the periods of more sustained efforts at composition. When read in this way, the short story gives richness and variety to the literary life that can be had in no other way.

CHAPTER IX

THE LITERARY DRAMA

The word drama comes from the Greek and means the representation of action. Like the epic and the novel, the drama is objective; that is, it deals with human life not as the author lives it directly, but as he conceives it through the lives of other men. The drama differs from the epic and novel in that it is not narrative but dramatic. The dramatist does not tell us a story about other people and the incidents and events in which they figured. He simply brings his characters before us, and through their speech and action represents life as he would have us experience it both as witnesses and as participants. The dramatic artist places the reader or spectator in a position of special and peculiar advantage, from which he may observe the behavior of men and women at play in a social world in which he himself does not actively play a part.

With respect to the drama world, the reader or spectator assumes the rôle of a superior being possessed of knowledge the actors do not have, in the light of which he understands their motives and passes judgment on their deeds. But since he identifies himself with their common nature

and recognizes their little world as the exact counterpart of his own, he is stirred to reflection by their clearly motivated actions, and moved with pity and fear by the doom of their irrevocable destinies. So the drama brings to us a twofold experience: through the world of art the imagination penetrates to meanings not readily, often not possibly, discernible in the actual world; and what we see awakens in us thoughts and feelings not likely to be aroused through common ordinary experience.

Furthermore, the drama is more subjective than the epic or the novel. To be sure, the author may not come on the stage and tell us in person what he thinks and feels, as the novelist often does; but, if his work is well done, his characters become real people to us, and what they say often impresses us as if the author were speaking in person. We think of them as individual personalities, and their expression at times becomes highly artistic and even lyrical. Frequently, too, the dramatist identifies himself with some one character through whom he seems to open his inmost soul. The drama is made up, so to speak, of a number of self-revelations of characters, not to one another, but to the reader to whom they confess even their most secret villainies.

The literature of the drama differs from all

other literature in that it is not primarily a simple art. The drama is written to be acted, and so is not confined in its appeal to language alone. The dramatist does not address himself directly to his readers or hearers, but he addresses himself to them through the actors, who become interpreters of his meaning. Acting in itself is a highly developed art, capable of moving us without the aid of words, and none of this power is lost, even though it be used only as the accompaniment of more specific expression in language. Often a play is a very good play without having any literary merit. What the actors do entertains us, no matter what they say or how they say it. The popular movie to-day is a form of drama with a maximum of action and a minimum of words.

The literary drama, although primarily intended for the stage, has the power of moving and delighting us through reading alone. It makes its appeal to the imagination through language without the aid of any histrionic interpretation. Often such plays gain but little by being acted. Sometimes they are flat failures on the stage. What is sensuous and spectacular depends for its effect upon the gorgeous realism of the stage, but what is imaginative in experience is hard to represent within the limits of concrete

acting. It is all but impossible to impersonate Macbeth, or Lear, or Falstaff. The imagination demands more than the actor can deliver. We can imagine such people, but in the actual world we cannot find them. Idealization has gone so far that, try as we will, we lack ingenuity to keep up with it on the stage. Literary drama, while it may be acted, does not depend upon what the theatre can add. It has gone far enough in some cases to produce pieces never intended for the stage.

The drama represents life as a struggle, a conflict of forces somehow released and violently moving toward a point of interference or intersection where one or the other force or set of forces must dominate and have the right of way. Just simple action of any kind is not sufficient for dramatic purposes. The disturbance must be threatening, and, in the case of tragedy, the forces released must be irreconcilable. Ordinary life is not dramatic. To be sure, it is made up very largely of action, but the action is not passionate; our behavior is moderately motivated, and the interplay of forces is friendly. They move in parallel lines, and when they do converge or intersect, each in turn graciously gives way to the other or they blend in harmony. For the most part rivals in business are friends, and candidates

for the same political office are usually only half in earnest. Life has many lines of interest, and for most of us its whole meaning does not lie in one direction only. But the dramatist fixes his attention on those episodes in life where singleness of interest and overmastering passion have involved people in struggles the intensity and violence of which are far beyond the ordinary.

It has long been the custom to speak of life as a drama and of the world as a stage. But, as a matter of fact, it is only occasionally that things are so ordered. Only at rare intervals is the social order of the world in a state of dramatic possibility. Famine, war, anarchy, and revolution in the realms of politics, business, society, and religion provide the environment conducive to the development of the eccentric and grotesque in character that make the dramatic possible. Crises in the history of nations and the life of races, social and industrial unrest, whatever separates the people into antagonistic groups, stimulates the eccentric in human nature, fosters the overgrowth of special faculties in men, and prompts them with inordinate ambitions. Such times and circumstances are likely to bring into the foreground persons who have a strong native tendency toward self-assertion — as it were, an itch for distinction.

It is easy to make fools of ourselves when the world in which we live welcomes and invites the exhibition of our hobbies, and the way to perdition is easy if at such times we identify our hobbies with our souls. Malvolio was a good enough fellow, and in ordinary circumstances would have remained quite respectable. But suddenly he found himself surrounded by forces and conditions that stimulated his tendency to self-admiration beyond all proportion and control, and he became the butt and laughing-stock of his little world. Brutus might have remained the noblest Roman of them all if the times had not been too hard for him. But his sense of honor could not withstand the strain of political adventure to which it urged him. In quieter times he might have flourished with an untarnished name and honor unimpaired.

But it is not all a matter of fateful environment. No doubt much that goes on in our universe will always seem to us capricious, but the freakishness of nature is not confined to things external to man. It manifests itself in human nature as well as in the most material and inanimate of things. We like to believe that the present status of things is directly the causal result of what has gone before, and we pride ourselves in tracing the sequences and laws by which these causes have operated.

We call this explanation, and often we try to comfort and console ourselves with the belief that such mental gymnastics constitute complete understanding.

But even the most sanguine and devoted disciples of law and order are constantly confronted with the apparently capricious and unexplainable in human nature and human behavior. Why, when all evidence is conclusive and a definite result should follow certain known antecedents, does the unexpected happen? We cannot tell. Our laws and theories of causation may be true enough, but they operate in dark and devious ways. We cannot fully understand our world nor satisfactorily account for all manner of human behavior. Even when the environmental stage seems to be set perfectly for some dramatic performance, only a very few people, comparatively speaking, ever act. By some curious dispensation of favors most of us are unfitted for the stage. The elements are so mixed in us that the whole meaning of life is seldom risked on one venture. Most men are too regularly formed, too evenly balanced, for spectacular action. Passion and reason

> "are so well commingled
> That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
> To sound what stop she please."

It is something irregular in the constitution of humanity, some vicious mole of nature in us, that through the stimulus of extraordinary circumstances is excited to dramatic behavior.

So the dramatist expresses for us the meaning of life as he comes to know it through dramatic situations in which characters overendowed with certain elements and faculties of human nature are spurred to spectacular action. Othello's jealousy, Macbeth's ambition for power, Antony's love of women, will lead to tragedy whenever the social stage is properly set. The hypersentimentalism of Antonio the merchant, the overmastering tendency to perverseness in Petruchio and Katharine, the stupidity of Bottom, the complaisant ignorance of Dogberry and Verges, the wit of Rosalind and Falstaff, when given free play in any situation of society are bound to exhibit the incongruities of life, the recognition of which makes up so much of our comic experiences.

The drama does not represent life as destiny, neither does it deal with the ordinary experiences of men. It shows us not what life generally is and what we may and should expect, but rather the extremes of experience which under very special conditions may be the fate of humanity. Perhaps none of us are perfectly symmetrical, having the elements compounded in stable proportions. To

use the language of the street, few of us are foolproof. Most of us are always slightly off centre. The laws of heredity may have delivered an uneven distribution of faculties; environment may have unduly fostered the overgrowth of some at the expense of others; we may have consciously formed habits that at some time will unconsciously betray us; any of these in favorable circumstances may lead to our undoing or subject us to ridicule. The drama presents such highly eccentric characters in fateful situations where we may behold their actions and sympathetically share their suffering or comic exhibition of the incongruities of life.

Generally speaking, the literary drama represents life either as tragedy or as comedy. There is, to be sure, a considerable body of dramatic writing that even by straining the definitions of terms can hardly be brought within the compass of these two general types. But for purposes of elementary study these irregular and sporadic pieces have hardly enough of difference in subject-matter or treatment to warrant separate classification or special notice. The dramatist may choose to portray life as one grand harmony of forces whose smooth and quiet action pleases and delights our romantic sensibilities; he may choose to move us by presenting the fatefully pathetic;

but usually he relies on some elements of the tragic or comic to intensify his action with passion or to relieve the monotony of sweetness with some spice of wit and humor.

It is not easy to define tragedy. The word is derived from the Greek and perhaps originally meant a goat-singer, from the oldest tragedies being exhibited when a goat was sacrificed or because a goat was the prize, or because the actors were clothed in goat-skins. Then, too, it may have been a harvest-song, since the root of the word appears in the names of several grains and especially in some good things to eat. Speaking of the Greek classic drama, Aristotle defines tragedy as "An imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper katharsis, or purgation, of these emotions." Goethe in a somewhat freer translation explains this passage from Aristotle as follows: "Tragedy is the imitation of a significant and complete action, which has a certain extension in time and is portrayed in beautiful language by separate individuals, each of whom plays a rôle, instead of having all represented by one person, as in the

narrative of a story or epic. After a course of events arousing pity and fear, the action closes with the equilibration of these passions." Continuing his explanation of Aristotle's definition, Goethe says:

> By "catharsis" he (Aristotle) understands this reconciling culmination, which is demanded of all drama, indeed of all poetical works.
>
> This occurs in the tragedy through a kind of human sacrifice, whether it be rigidly worked out with the death of the victim, or, under the influence of a favoring divinity, be satisfied by a substitute, as in the case of Abraham and Agamemnon. But this reconciliation, this release, is necessary at the end if the tragedy is to be a perfect work of art.

During the Middle Ages tragedy came to be defined as a sudden misfortune in which one noble and prosperous is hurled from his high position into corresponding depth of poverty, disgrace, and suffering without any apparent guilt on the part of the victim. In the "Prologue to the Monke's Tale," and again in several of the stories told by the monk, Chaucer speaks of tragedy in the following manner:

> "Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
> As olde bokes maken us memorie,
> Of him that stood in greet prosperitee
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Into miserie, and endeth wrecchedly.

Tragedie is noon other maner thing,
Ne can in singing crye ne biwaille,
But for that fortune alwey wol assaille
With unwar strook the regnes that ben proude;
For when men trusteth hir, than wol she faille,
And covere hir brighte face with a cloude.

I wol biwayle in maner of Tragedie
The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree,
And fillen so that ther nas no remedie
To bringe hem out of hir adversitee;
For certein, whan that fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hir withholde;
Lat no man truste on blind prosperitee;
Be war by thise ensamples trewe and olde."

These definitions and explanations were arrived at for the most part through a study of the serious drama of the Greek classic period. Sophocles, Æschylus, and Euripides seem to have set the fashion in tragedy for all time, and Aristotle's analysis and exposition of what they did appears to be final. During modern times a very great body of tragic drama has been produced in the languages of western Europe, and much comment on this work has been offered, but little in the way of criticism has been added that may not by easy implication be included in Aristotle's treatment of the subject. Indeed, most critics start with his definition and confine their efforts

to an exposition of how the drama they are studying illustrates his abstract principles of the tragic in dramatic art.

What does Aristotle tell us about tragedy? In the first place, he tells us that, like all drama, tragedy expresses the meaning of life through action. In the second place, that tragedy is peculiar in that it represents life in such a way as to arouse in the reader or spectator emotions of pity and fear. These emotions are called to life in us through witnessing the disasters and calamities that overtake worthy and noble characters as the result of adverse fortune or untoward circumstances. The characters must be people such as we are, but somewhat above the ordinary, so that the artistic language they use may not seem unnatural, and that the catastrophes that are visited upon them may be far-reaching and involve many people. The actions of common men that mark their spheres of influence usually are not of enough importance to many other people to give the fate of such men wide-spread and tragic significance. The struggle in which the tragic hero is involved can end only with his overthrow, and in most drama with his death, but his tragic action must reach out and touch the lives of others who also suffer in his final catastrophe. Furthermore, the tragic hero must always be of sufficient nobility

to sustain the quality and degree of passion that makes tragedy in the world possible.

The tragic action presents the hero in conflict with external forces that in the end must overcome him. In the more ancient drama, fate as an external force seems to play a more important part than is ostensibly assigned her in modern tragedy. This is due in part to the fact that personal individuality was less pronounced in ancient tragedy than it is in modern, and in part to the ancient conception of fate which included much that we moderns think of as natural law. Then, too, the line of separation between man and the outside world was more sharply drawn by the ancient mind than by the modern. Not that we are more aware of man's identity with the universe than the ancients were, but we feel the identity in a different way. They projected the spirit of man into the phenomenal world; we find in man the working of physical law. We speak of law as inviolable; they spoke of fate as irrevocable. So whether we think of men struggling against irrevocable fate or in conflict with inviolable laws of nature working within them and around them, we are moved in the same way. We pity their helplessness and are fearful about the outcome of a struggle in which men cannot succeed and the order of the world be kept in-

tact. Superficially, at least, modern tragedy appears less fateful because the tragic action is begun by forces acting in the hero, and so gives him a causal responsibility for the conflict that destroys him.

In all tragedy the hero either by fate or the operation of natural law must be endowed with tragic possibilities, "the vicious mole of nature in him" that indicates predisposition and passion to attack or resist what is fatefully established or providentially ordained. Tragic guilt varies in proportion to the degree in which the action represents the hero as responsible, and the degree of guilt determines the relative proportion and intensity of pity and fear that constitute the tragic experience of the reader or spectator. If the action represents the hero as the victim of unfeeling fate, our pity for him is great, and we fear lest at any time like misfortunes may befall us. On the other hand, if the hero appears responsible for the action that destroys him, we pity him because of his weakness and suffering, but fear the awful consciousness and consequences of guilt. In either case we are moved with pity and fear as the action moves toward the inevitable doom.

Tragedy represents a serious action with greater completeness and finality than we are likely to find presented in actual life. The imagination of

the dramatist goes beyond, completes, and illustrates what history only imperfectly suggests or partially exemplifies. Thus the mingled emotions of pity and fear that constitute the basis of the emotional element in the tragic experience of the reader are exercised in a juster proportion and more befitting degree of intensity than they are likely to be through the observation of incidents and events that actually occur in the lives of men.

Furthermore, the severe emotional strain that accompanies our beholding the action of the play is relieved and brought to a state of equilibrium by the catastrophe that ends the career of the tragic hero. We have pitied him and feared the outcome of the struggle. His destruction ends his career of personal experience, his maladjustment to the world in which he lived, his suffering; and in the triumph of fate and the laws that he has so boldly challenged our confidence in the stability and moral righteousness of the universe is reassured and strengthened. This is the "katharsis," or purification, that Aristotle speaks of. Pity and fear have been aroused in us to their highest tension and in their proper proportion by following an action in which a human being challenges the eternal principles of being, and in his just but pitiable defeat our belief in these principles is clearly vindicated.

The words tragedy and tragic are applied to a great variety of experiences ranging from the merely accidental or pathetic to the sublimely terrific. There is no consistency in the use of these terms, and while the great dramatists have agreed pretty well in holding themselves consciously or unconsciously to the production of the kind of thing Aristotle has defined for us, there is by no means the same agreement among popular critics to observe the same restriction of meaning in their ordinary usage. No doubt the mediæval notion of tragedy that laid the major emphasis on the element of pity has been most persistent. Nothing is commoner today than to confuse the pathetic and the tragic; we are accustomed to hear people speak of mere accidents or even slight physical deformities or moral irregularities as tragedies even when these phenomena are accompanied by no serious actions or consequences whatsoever.

With the changing notions of society and social ideals there has come, too, a change in the conception of what aspects of life may be taken as the subjects of serious drama. No doubt the increasing prevalence of a democratic attitude toward life has had a tendency to weaken the insistence on nobility as a necessary requirement in the character of the tragic hero. As early as 1731

George Lillo in his Dedication to George Barnwell wrote:

> Tragedy is so far from losing its dignity by being accommodated to the circumstances of the generality of mankind, that it is more truly august, in proportion to the extent of its influence, and the numbers that are properly affected by it. . . .
>
> If princes, etc., were alone liable to misfortunes arising from vice or weakness in themselves or others, there would be good reason for confining the characters in tragedy to those of superior rank; but since the contrary is evident, nothing can be more reasonable than to proportion the remedy to the disease.
>
> I am far from denying that tragedies founded on any instructive and extraordinary events in history, or well-invented fables, where the persons introduced are of the highest rank, are without their use, even to the bulk of the audience. . . . Plays founded on moral tales in private life may be of admirable use, by carrying conviction to the mind with such irresistible force as to engage all the faculties and power of the soul in the cause of virtue, by stifling vice in the first principles.

It cannot be denied that recent drama has been successful in representing tragedy in the humbler ranks of society, but it is, to say the least, a disputable question whether this tragedy has much if any literary merit. We have seen above that the acted drama may succeed for other qualities than those that make for literary art. The realism of ordinary, often ignoble, life is not consistent

with a high order of literary style, and it remains to be proven whether the common run of men have the degree of passion, the high order of emotion and thought, that lead to tragic action. For the last two hundred years, in English at least, the development of the acted drama has shown a steady substitution of prose for poetry, and a corresponding tendency to represent the less serious aspects of life as lived by the mediocre masses. However, the poetic literary drama has continued to be written sporadically, mostly for closet entertainment, and when such drama attempts the tragic it adheres quite consistently to the noble type of character as required in Aristotle's definition.

Contemporary English drama is notably weak in tragedy according to the classic conception of the term. It may be that an ever-increasing tendency to interpret life and society from a more democratic point of view has influenced the writers of drama to address themselves more especially to the generality of men and to confine themselves in both theme and treatment to what the masses can readily enjoy. Then, too, it must be conceded that many of the playwrights of to-day are lamentably lacking in a fine sense and appreciation of artistic values. They are less concerned with the creation of a work of fine art in the high-

est sense than with the financial returns that may come from pleasing the multitude with such cheap sentiment or melodramatic thrills as may be easily excited through a gross stimulation of the senses.

In his preface to "The Tragedy of Nan," Mr. Masefield writes about contemporary tragedy as follows:

> Tragedy at its best is a vision of the heart of life. The heart of life can only be laid bare in the agony and exultation of dreadful acts. The vision of agony, or spiritual contest, pushed beyond the limits of the dying personality, is exalting and cleansing. It is only by such vision that a multitude can be brought to the passionate knowledge of things exulting and eternal.
>
> Commonplace people dislike tragedy, because they dare not suffer and cannot exult. The truth and rapture of man are holy things, not lightly to be scorned. A carelessness of life and beauty marks the glutton, the idler, and the fool in their deadly path across history.
>
> The poetic impulse of the Renaissance is now spent. The poetic drama, the fruit of that impulse, is now dead. Until a new poetic impulse gathers, playwrights trying for beauty must try to create new forms in which beauty and the high things of the soul may pass from the stage to the mind. Our playwrights have all the powers except that power of exultation which comes from a delighted brooding on excessive, terrible things. That power is seldom granted to man: twice or thrice to a race perhaps, not oftener. But it seems to me certain that every effort, however humble, toward the achieving of that power helps the genius of a race to obtain it, though the obtaining may be fifty years after the strivers are dead.

Of seriousness the contemporary drama in English has enough, but it is not the seriousness of classic tragedy. It is the seriousness that comes with the milder suffering that grows out of the commonplace issues of life. For the most part it is concerned with very ordinary men and the affairs of every-day life. It seldom penetrates the heart or stirs the depth of passion. It deals with the temporary and the relative, and its appeal is not to the elemental and enduring that color the experiences of men in all ages. However, in plays like "Riders to the Sea," by Mr. Synge, and "The Tragedy of Nan," by Mr. Masefield, we do feel that we are in the presence of drama that has the true tragic atmosphere. And it may be, as Mr. Masefield believes, that out of this indifferently serious drama will come again in due time a great tragedy capable of arousing in readers and spectators true exultation of soul and through this working the proper cleansing of spirit.

If, as we have seen, it is difficult to define tragedy, we can say with equal finality that it is impossible to define comedy with the hope of any general agreement or acceptance. No doubt we have some notion of what the term means, but usually we do not go far enough in our analysis of this notion to make sharp differences between comedy and allied forms of experiences such as

humor, wit, ridicule, sarcasm, etc. Speaking of this subject, Elizabeth Woodbridge says: "Perhaps nothing in the province of literary form is so baffling as comedy. Considered objectively, as an art-product, it trenches on the realm of the grotesque, confessedly one of the most difficult problems of æsthetics, while in its subjective aspect it requires an analysis of our intellectual processes which has not yet been satisfactorily given us by psychologists. Moreover, in considering concrete literary examples of comedy we are constantly checked by the conviction that the perception of what is comic is something very unstable, subject to change with process of time, and showing wide divergence among different classes of society living at the same time. This is, of course, partly true also of our perception of the tragic, but by no means to the same extent. For tragedy . . . deals with phases of human nature which are relatively eternal and unchangeable. We cannot, of course, affirm that our perception of the tragic in the 'Œdipus' is exactly the same as was that of Sophocles's contemporaries; but certainly time has made far less difference here than it has in the understanding and appreciation of Aristophanes, and this quite aside from the inevitable obscurity of the comic poet's political allusions. Apparently, the feelings to which

tragedy appeals attained a high degree of development at an earlier time than did those to which comedy appeals, and they have therefore undergone less change."

Like the word tragedy, comedy comes from the Greek, and it meant, perhaps, to sing at a revel, or a village revel; the etymology of the word is not quite certain. In a vague general way we think of comedy or the comic as something funny and the occasion for laughter. And, in the drama, that is usually considered comedy which is less serious than tragedy, which causes laughter, and has a happy ending. But, as Miss Woodbridge has pointed out in the passage quoted above, people have not always laughed at the same things, and the so-called comic spirit responds to different phenomena from age to age or generation to generation. The development of our philanthropic nature has tended to give a touch of seriousness and pathos to much that once moved men to comic laughter, and increased knowledge has shifted into the realm of the comic certain attitudes and beliefs that once were assumed and accepted with great seriousness and gravity.

If comedy is akin to the grotesque, like the grotesque it is often the result of perspective, and appears and disappears with a shifting point of view. Physical deformity and bodily contortion

in pain no longer strike us as comic, except, perhaps, at times in youth; but we know that the dramatists in the time of Shakespeare could and did rely on such phenomena to produce comic effect. Moreover, the chivalric notions of honor, the Renaissance notions of love among men, the seriousness with which nobility addressed itself in aristocratic society of several generations ago, if they have not quite become comic to us, yet, to say the least about them, they have certainly lost their seriousness.

Even in our own generation we can see social conventions in style and manners, practices in religion, political and moral attitudes shifting about in the classification of qualities of experience. The long skirts and high-neck dresses so much a matter of moral seriousness to our mothers are comic when we see them on young women today. "The hell of our Puritan fathers," says a humorous critic, "is frozen over, and we grin at the devil through the ice." Phrases like "War to end war," "to make the world safe for democracy," "hundred per cent American," "League of Nations to prevent war," and the like, that moved us with such gravity a few years ago, are obsolete as serious experiences, even if to some they are hardly far enough removed to appear comic or ridiculous. This shifting attitude on the

part of men works a change in the quality of experience circumstances may arouse in them and makes it impossible to define comedy, or to explain just what is meant by the comic.

Furthermore, there is no known satisfactory explanation of laughter. We do not know just why we laugh, but we do know that laughter does not always indicate identity of experience. The many words we have, such as humor, wit, ridicule, sarcasm, etc., indicate a considerable variety of concepts among laughter-provoking experiences.

Students of comedy agree pretty well in associating the comic with the grotesque, and in finding its ultimate origin somehow connected with the perception of incongruity and surprise. Incongruity may be defined as impropriety, or lack of agreement and harmony between what we expect and what happens. It implies a reasonable degree of familiarity with the phenomena presented and sufficient uniformity in their nature to assure confidence in what to expect. To be sure, we make allowance for a reasonable variation among individuals; but when the variation from the norm is strikingly unusual or exaggerated, we are surprised, and recognition is likely to be accompanied with comic enjoyment.

For illustration, we have some notion of how a man should look; how tall, how big around, and

of what proportions. We do not definitely state dimensions, but somehow the norm is present, and we use it as a standard of judgment. Of course we do not require that men as we meet them shall agree exactly with this norm, but if they are at variance beyond a moderate degree, we are shocked with surprise and perhaps moved to laughter. Often contrast gives point to the variations, as when we see a very short man walking with a very tall one. Either alone might not have appeared at all comic, but when the two are together their peculiarities are accentuated. Likewise incongruities in the social, moral, and religious fields of experience are often the cause of comic laughter; as, when a person behaves according to the rules of decorum in the society in which he usually moves but not in force in the society in which at the moment he finds himself; or when we loudly accuse other people of violating moral and religious precepts, but are innocently unaware that we are guilty of the same violations.

It is evident enough that incongruity to be comic must be innocent and not very harmful; beyond a certain degree the effect becomes painful or disgusting. If physical deformity in any way incapacitates the person for normal healthy living, it becomes pathetic. We laugh at one who

awkwardly falls, but our mirth ceases if we discover that the person was injured in the fall. In the social world the comic is always dangerously near the crude, the boorish, the disgusting; here perhaps more than in almost any other phase of life the least jolt is likely to become offensive. Our moral and religious natures are less easily outraged. Perhaps because the standards are less easily discerned and, therefore, not stated with like accuracy of detail. Rules of social etiquette may be positively formulated, learned, and perfectly observed; but in ethics and religion we are not so sure, and uncertainty has a tendency to be lenient. A sermon against the use of intoxicating liquor preached from a pulpit paid for by the brewer may be comic to those who know about it; and we may laugh at the wayward son who lies about his way of life because he honestly wishes to spare his mother; but to eat with one's knife at a polite dinner is unpardonable, never comic.

The perception of incongruity depends upon knowledge, keen observation, shrewd judgment; and so comedy becomes an affair of the intellect rather than of the heart. Comedy, then, may be grouped in two classes—low comedy and high comedy, according to the degree of intelligence and the amount of knowledge required to appre-

ciate the incongruous in the matter presented. Usually in comedy prepared for the public theatre high comedy and low comedy are intermingled in order that all who come may laugh. Shakespeare was always careful about this. Those who cannot smile at the curiously irregular juxtaposition of moral and intellectual qualities in Falstaff may laugh at his ungainly body and its all but grotesque movements; and if for some the incongruous social, moral, and religious gymnastics so subtly exhibited in the behavior of Portia, Bassanio, Antonio, and the rest are too far removed, they can amuse themselves with the clownish simplicity of Launcelot Gobbo and the physical contortions of Shylock as he alternately experiences joy or pain. Even in tragedies there is usually some comic relief lest the serious strain wear itself out and degenerate into the melodramatic. This again is for the most part in the nature of low comedy, as the knocking-at-the-gate scene in "Macbeth" and the grave-diggers' scene in "Hamlet." Generally speaking, low comedy is perceptual and requires no keenness of intellect nor more than very ordinary information; high comedy is conceptual and possible only to a high order of intelligence and copious knowledge often of a specialized character.

While the literary drama generally may be

classified as tragedy or comedy, there is a very considerable body of drama that is strictly neither. Sentimentalism delights in the pathetic, and has created a special serious drama that appeals strictly to pity and often moves to tears without being in the least tragic. Then, too, the tragic and the comic are often so evenly woven together in certain pieces that we have come to speak of them as tragicomedies. Furthermore, with the development of the democratic attitude toward life and society, all qualities and degrees of feeling and intelligence have become legitimate sources of dramatic appeal, and this has resulted in an almost infinite hybridization of the drama for novel effects. However, most literary drama is in some way made out of the elements of tragedy and comedy as explained above.

Like the epic and the novel, the drama tells a story, in a different manner, to be sure, and for different purposes, but by using the same elements of construction — plot, characters, and setting. In the epic, plot or narrative follows the order of events in history or legend through which the destiny of races, nations, or movements may be made manifest and impressive. The novelist selects from history, or freely invents, such incidents as may be organized in a causal sequence to exhibit the natural behavior and development

of a character or characters in some arbitrary social world. Plot in the drama resembles that of the novel, but the incidents selected must be dramatic; they must exhibit the characters in action, and the actions must be suited to the words. As we have seen above, not all life is dramatic; the stage must be especially prepared. Incidents need not be dramatic in order to make a good plot for a novel. Life has many interests and many meanings, and almost any series of incidents in the lives of interesting people may make good novel material; but the drama can use only what reveals the inner life through action.

Plot in the drama follows the same plan of construction as in the novel and may be represented by the same forms of diagram. With equal propriety we may speak of the exciting force, rising action, climax, falling action, and catastrophe, and the terms have about the same significance. But in the drama, plot must be more rigidly condensed, and self-explanatory. The novelist may take all the time he needs, and gradually unfold his meaning through endless detail and illustration, but what the dramatist does must be done quickly. His effects are decisive, achieved by a sureness of touch that tolerates neither hesitation nor retreat. He deals with life at high tension, with characters in whom

purpose and passion are kindled to white heat, and with a social order whose machinery is so delicately adjusted that it responds to the slightest influence, and cause is followed by almost instant effect. Often the dramatist finishes his whole work in fewer pages than the novelist may devote to a prologue. He can do this only by the severest condensation and most determined motivation.

Furthermore, the incidents in the plot of a drama must explain themselves. The novelist may definitely point out the connection between the incidents of his story; he may tell us just how they affect the characters who take part in them, and the motives that prompt the characters to action. But the dramatist may never speak in person. What he wishes to tell us his plot must represent; what he leaves vague or ambiguous here will be a mystery forever.

The plot in a drama is worked out through the representation of a series of actions, each consisting of one or more scenes in which all or some of the characters take part. Sometimes the scenes and actions are bound together by the same characters figuring in several in succession; sometimes by the deeds of one person or group of persons working effects in the lives of others who have common interests. The whole action in its gradual

evolution is never represented, but only those episodes in which very pronounced stages of progress are visible, and from these the intervening developments may be inferred.

The number of acts and scenes varies. In the Shakespearian drama there are always five acts and several scenes to each act. In a general way, the acts correspond to the different stages in the progress of the story; the first act representing the exciting force; the second, the rising action; the third, the climax; the fourth, the falling action; and the fifth, the catastrophe. In more recent drama, the tendency has been to reduce the number of acts and scenes. However, there is no uniformity of practice, but in the English literary drama the five acts prevail.

Since the dramatist may never speak in person, characterization in the drama must be wholly dramatic. The characters come before us often without any introduction, and reveal themselves through action, through social intercourse with their fellows, and through soliloquies and asides. When the drama is acted the characters are bodily before us; we see them and hear them. Every movement, every expression of face, every tone of voice, becomes significant. Even the clothes they wear give us hints of what they are. Often, too, much may be inferred from what the char-

acters say about one another, and from the attitudes they assume. When our acquaintance with a drama is through reading alone, of course we must rely upon imagination to do for us all that is actually represented on the stage in concrete detail. This increases the reader's difficulties in that it forces him to play a double rôle; he becomes both actor and audience.

To accomplish this purpose, it is necessary for the reader to master the text of the play with more thoroughness than is required of one who sees the play acted. He must attend to every detail of the language and allow nothing to escape him, in order that the imagination may be properly equipped to penetrate the very heart of the author's meaning. Recent dramatists have been accustomed to try to aid the imagination of the reader by preceding each act or scene with long specific directions wherein certain characteristic details are definitely prescribed. All of this direction, of course, is absorbed in the stage-setting when the play is acted; but when it is necessary for a complete understanding of the play, it is a confession as well as indication of weakness in the drama as a work of literary art. The literary drama should express itself through the text alone without any supplementary comment by the author.

Setting in the drama must be appropriate to the action and characters, and must be emotionally sympathetic with the other elements of the play. The author must project his story in such time and place as will make his characters and actions seem plausible. Time and place need not be actually true or even possible, but they must be so controlled as not to outrage our sense of plausibility. The social stage must be so set that dramatic action is inevitable for the given characters. Tragedy is usually given a historical setting in order that the direful consequences may appear the more impressive. Comedy may be localized at any time in any place and condition of society that exhibits naturally the incongruities desired for comic effect, always remembering that the drama is fine art, and as such is subject to the requirements of any and all art. The society of the drama must always be decent, respectable, and of sufficient refinement and culture not to offend our sense of artistic symmetry and beauty. What happens must seem perfectly natural to the place and time in which it is represented. Within the play special appropriate settings are often provided for acts and scenes to heighten the emotional effect by sympathy of environmental circumstance with action and character.

The drama, being the most objective of all literature, is the product of creative imagination. The dramatist arrives at his notions of truth and reality through completing imaginatively what is only imperfectly and fragmentarily presented in the phenomenal world. In him the creative process goes so far that he gives his notions concrete physical embodiment on the stage. He fashions for us a new world with new people such as never actually existed before but with whom we must reckon now and hereafter. Œdipus, Macbeth, Falstaff, Tartuffe, Faust, did not exist for us before the dramatists gave them being, and now they are as real as Alexander and Napoleon. Through this new world the dramatist calls to life in us qualities and degrees of experience not otherwise possible. Everything is concentrated, organically unified, and presented in imaginative completeness.

Since the drama is so especially the work of creative imagination, it is through the imagination working creatively that the student comes to a full appreciation of the author's meaning. It is through suggestions found here and there in the lives of men and in events that actually occur in this world that the dramatist arrives at a complete understanding of the unity that holds our seemingly fragmentary and disconnected

lives together. He brings causes and their effects in such close proximity and unmistakable order that doubt is shattered and our vague hopes and expectations are clarified in the light of determined consequences. He sets the deeds of men against the background of their inner lives; incidents and events become symbols of thought, of schemes, of craft, and of stupidity. The inner and outer are so organically bound together that we see the motive of history as natural law working through the impulses, ambitions, passions, and ideals of men.

The dramatist would intensify life by condensing its full meaning and comprehension into the experiences of a few hours. But the limitations of his art restrict his exposition to the representation of only a few scenes of swift action and highly significant language. To be sure, clearness of vision and singleness of purpose give definiteness to his arrangement of details and perspicuity of meaning to his language; yet where every word and gesture are calculated to make some specific impression, it is easy to miss something essential in the combined effect.

So the student must read imaginatively, fitting incident to language, scene to scene, and act to act. He must allow nothing to escape his notice or his memory. He has not found the author's

meaning until the whole play is before him as a unit perfect in every detail through which the imagination may penetrate to more remote relations. The dramatist conceived his characters as complete individuals with unique personalities, and from what they do and say in their respective rôles the student must reconstruct them. If he misses the sense of a single word or misconstrues the slightest act, he risks failure to interpret the whole play. It is so easy to read along from scene to scene and let notions come as they will without reference to what has gone before, or without testing the validity of their underlying unity. Such reading is not study and can never bring one to a true conception of the meaning of a drama as a whole.

Emotionally the drama is free to play over the whole gamut of human feeling. In serious literary drama the characters usually are noble, and the actions in which they engage are freighted with grave significance to large numbers of people. Fear and obedience characterize our attitude toward authority whether it be in the realm of politics, society, or religion. Our happiness and safety depend upon the stability of order in the universe, and our only hope of justice is founded upon a belief in moral righteousness inviolably present in all constituted authority. We are over-

awed in the presence of kings and princes whether their position of dominance is due to inherent greatness of mind and force of will, or whether they are only the representatives of vested authority that chooses to manifest its right to rule through them. To behold such characters going about their public business with every motive of their inner lives laid bare, to witness the fate of a nation, moral and religious principles and truths, challenged and tested by unrighteous ambition or overmastering passion, cannot but arouse in thinking men the deepest anxiety and strain their nobler emotions to the highest tension. It is with the deepest sorrow and regret that we see the nobility of the world going to perdition; often, to be sure, caught in the tangled schemes of circumstance; often, too, by conscious self-determination and wilful defiance.

In comedy, too, and in all lighter forms of drama our sensibilities are tested and exercised over widely extended latitudes. Our appreciation of the comic is sharpened and accelerated by the dramatist in that he brings together and exhibits objects and phenomena of experience in ways that heighten contrast and facilitate our perception of incongruity where we suspect it least. No doubt the emotional intensity is less here than in tragedy and more dependent upon knowledge

and keenness of intellect, but the dramatist aids our intelligence and often constructs his plots and portrays his characters with such definiteness and fulness of detail that he removes difficulties insurmountable in actual every-day experience. The sentimental play is designed to give us thrills, light, no doubt, and often unjustifiable, but still wholesome, for it keeps us alive to situations and conditions in life important enough for our serious notice but so common that we are likely to become indifferent.

In the acted drama the emotional appeal is strengthened by reinforcing the imagination with vivid sense experience. Concrete action when well executed gives definiteness and precision to what may often be but vaguely conceived through imagination, and while there is always a risk of lessening the volume of experience by restricting imagination to the limitations of the senses, yet the loss thus sustained is often more than compensated by vividness and warmth of color. To see the characters before us, and hear them speak, to watch their actions, noting every gesture and facial expression, gives us a clearer consciousness of reality and moves us to more decided reaction, a sharper focussing of our sensibilities and feeling. Pantomime in itself is impressive, and when to a dumb show we add the rhythmic cadences of

musical speech freighted with all the passion and thought of noble minds, there is something at fault in us if we are not thereby deeply moved.

The literary drama is effected through the utmost rigidity and condensation of thought; it gives us, as it were, a concentrated solution of experience. The limitations of his art impose upon the dramatist the strictest economy of means; he may waste neither words nor action. This heavy loading of phrase and crowding of action has a tendency to overwhelm the reader, and often he loses himself amid the abundance and complexity of imaginative suggestion. The ideas definitely expressed in the language or to be inferred from the behavior of the characters in related scenes and acts are powerful agents in determining the quality and degree of feeling that colors our appreciation, while at the same time they become the inspiration of further thought in our search for the meaning of life.

The dramatist tells us what he thinks in what the characters say to one another and in soliloquy; but in a larger way, less definitely, to be sure, he outlines for us his conception of major truths of life, its laws and purposes, through the construction of his plots and the conception of his characters. For artistic effect the language used by the characters in a drama is raised con-

siderably above the style of ordinary discourse, and so we may easily lose the thought because of our delight in the beauty and rhythm through which it is expressed. Often it is necessary to read and reread passages slowly, giving the imagination time enough to work and meditation a chance to dissolve and clarify the solid matter so generously dropped to the understanding. The characters must be endowed with nobility worthy of and appropriate to the exalted action in which they play a part. As their passion is extraordinary among men, so their thought is raised above the commonplace, and most of us are capable of comprehending their meaning only by special attention and mental effort.

More difficult still is a clear understanding of the ideas expressed through the larger design of the work as a whole. A piece of fine art is always a unit in which every detail is consistent with the sum total of related effects. Yet it is possible to appreciate a great drama in parts without any notion of the significance of their combined impression. To illustrate: There are people who laugh at the drunken porter in "Macbeth," who are amused while they shudder at the words of the witches and the appearance of the ghosts, who are horrified at the brutal murders, and yet who have no thought about the major theme of

the play, a noble human being going to perdition because of a master passion of ambition for power within him encouraged by ironically equivocal agencies and appearances in the world about him.

Among the readers of "The Merchant of Venice," how many ever comprehend the meaning of the play as a unit? Most rejoice in Antonio as the perfect merchant, in Bassanio as the ideal lover, in Portia as the noblest of women, and, after committing to memory the speech about mercy, they indulge their romantic proclivities in the moonlight with Lorenzo and Jessica and close lightly with the ring episode. They never suspect that in this play Shakespeare has given us a masterpiece of high comedy, a subtle yet clear exhibition of the incongruities among the theories and practices of human life, an accurate delineation of the grotesque appearance of attitudes and conventions with reference to shifting points of view, an illuminating illustration of how counter our reaction toward the same phenomena may be when presented among different subsidiary circumstances. And yet in these larger designs of plot and conceptions of character the dramatist has expressed his most significant ideas. They are not always readily apprehended, but the thoughtful student does not stop until he has unravelled their mystery.

The style of the drama is necessarily very compact. The dramatist must practise the greatest economy in expression, and so his language must be given the fullest power of suggestion. He must choose words rich in connotation and arrange them in few sentences to express many ideas. As in the construction of plot he represents a whole history through a few well-chosen scenes, so in language he must suggest a whole philosophy in a few words well rounded into terse phrases, and arranged in sentences faultlessly clear and logical yet pleasing in rhythm and beautiful in imagery or picture. And all of this must be done in such a way as to seem perfectly natural to the characters and to the action which it accompanies and of which it is a part. The drama is fine art, and because of the shortness of time and the intensity of dramatic experience nothing less than the most highly artistic language will satisfy its needs. So the literary drama has been restricted to the nobler types of character and to the higher plane of society in order that the refined speech might not offend or become ridiculous.

It is a mistake to suppose that since the drama was written to be read or to be heard in the theatre, therefore it must give up its full meaning to whosoever may choose to read or listen. We may as well say that good music must

surrender its beauty to any one who chooses to play or sing. Fine art can be readily understood and appreciated only by the equals or superiors of the creating artist, and these are usually least willing to discuss and criticise without preliminary study. The ordinary student is fortunate, indeed, if through persevering effort he can approximate a reasonable mastery of the experience a great artist has tried to represent through the medium of a difficult art. That the chief medium of the literary drama is language does not simplify the art. Language is the commonest means of expression and communication, but it is also the most powerful and complex. It is capable of infinite variation and so of unlimited suggestion. The dramatist moulds his language into a style suggestive of copious ideas and discriminating judgments. It is not always easy for the reader to reproduce such experiences instantly; often it is not possible at all without the most careful attention, preparation, and meditation. This much at least the earnest student must at all times be willing to pay.

Summarizing, we may say the drama expresses the meaning of life as it reveals itself in extraordinary action brought on by the interference of violent forces the ultimate consequences of which may or may not be serious and catastrophic. In

the more general sense, drama is not pure literature, because when presented on the stage much of the effect is due to other agencies than words. Literary drama must have the qualities of linguistic style that make it fine art, and so give it the power of delighting us through reading alone. Tragedy includes all serious drama that represents a conflict of irreconcilable forces that ends in disaster usually requiring the death of the hero. It is calculated to arouse in the reader mingled emotions of pity and fear with more fitting degrees of intensity and juster proportions than we are likely to experience them among the phenomena of actual life. Comedy exhibits the incongruities of life in such a manner as to shock us and yet not lead to calamitous results. Its appeal is primarily to the intellect, and ranges from the lowest types of buffoonery to the keenest philosophical analysis and discovery of moral contrasts and religious inconsistencies. It is corrective in effect in that it neutralizes our tendencies toward eccentricity.

Like the epic and the novel, the drama tells a story, and utilizes the same elements of plot, characters, and setting; however, on account of space these must be concentrated in nature and wholly self-explanatory. The drama is the most imaginative of all literature in that it creates a

new world complete and final in the action and characters it chooses to present. It makes its strong emotional appeal through the representation of human behavior raised to the highest power by extraordinarily stimulating circumstances, and it provokes the finest quality of thinking through the suggestion of ideas that come from observing the motives and consequences of human behavior logically and finally presented.

The drama had its ultimate origin in the innate tendency of the human being to imitate. As children take great delight in imitating the actions of others, mostly their elders and superiors, just so adults have always amused and instructed themselves by playing over the behavior of their superiors, mostly heroes and gods, and by mimicking the incongruities in the behavior of their equals. Such playing seems to have been common among very ancient races, and somehow it appears always to have been associated with religious rites and festivities. No doubt, primitive man, having only the most rudimentary language, expressed himself more freely in bodily contortion and in action, and since the more significant phases of his experience were matters of religion, what he did in the way of religious expression has proved itself more valuable and permanent.

However, such playing can hardly be called drama until the action presented reveals a unity of purpose, a cause-and-effect relation of incident to incident that clearly motivates the performance. In other words, there was no real drama until the action imitated was arranged according to a definitely constructed plot. Literary drama becomes possible only after a language is sufficiently developed to make it of service in expressing the high degree of thought and emotion that lead to significant action. Generally speaking, the earliest literary drama is poetic, and makes its appearance in any language only after that language has been developed as an effective means of literary expression through the creation of a considerable body of epic and lyric poetry.

The English drama is no exception to the rule; it had its origin in religion and began with pantomime, or nothing more than short dialogue in Latin among the priests officiating at the Easter service. The liturgy being all in Latin, the story of the Resurrection was acted in order that its meaning might be clearer and more impressive to an ignorant congregation. From the simplest beginnings the practice of playing was extended until on different religious feast-days the whole story of the life of Christ was dramatized. Later, the cycle was extended to include stories from

the Old Testament as well. In time these plays were taken from the church and performed on movable stages especially provided, and to assist the clergy in acting appropriate stories were assigned to different trade guilds. The guilds that assisted in the performance of religious plays gradually introduced into the cycles of stories secular comic elements which they carried over from the games and sports with which they entertained themselves on holidays and during vacations.

These religious dramatizations of the stories of the Old and New Testaments were quite general over western Europe, and on the Continent were known as mysteries. In England they were more commonly called Miracle Plays, while on the Continent a miracle play was concerned with stories from the lives of the saints. With the development of skill in acting and facility in creative composition a new type of drama called Morality came into existence. This type of play was nothing more than the dramatization of an action in which the abstract virtues and vices figured as characters.

To be sure, the composition of these plays was very crude, and with very rare exceptions they had no literary merit at all. The minstrels did what they could to refine the crude attempts at

poetry in this early drama, but it was not until the classic drama was revived and studied in the universities that the style of the drama began to show signs of literary quality. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth marked improvement was shown in the literary style of the drama, and with the coming of full nationality toward the close of her reign the drama burst forth in full glory and rapidly perfected its form of literary expression.

From about 1590 to 1625 is the Golden Age in the history of the English drama. William Shakespeare is the chief dramatist of this period, and by common consent the greatest dramatic poet of all time. In 1642 the theatres were closed by act of Parliament, and practically all composition of drama ceased until after the restoration in 1660, when there was an extraordinary revival of the drama under French influence. This second creative period carried over into the early years of the next century and then gradually died out.

During the last two hundred years there has been no great English literary drama. There has been no dearth of dramatic composition, but prose has more generally supplanted poetry, and the emphasis has been on other elements of the drama than language. Furthermore, the development of

the novel as a type of literature has provided a prose form of expression more effective as art than prose drama, and the modern theatre has been so perfected that it achieves its purposes without much dependence upon the literary quality of the language used upon the stage.

However, during the last generation, especially during the past years of the twentieth century, the production of drama in English has been so prolific and of such quality that it is deserving of notice in almost any general study of dramatic literature. It is hazardous to attempt any final estimate of the literary value of this work, but it is the opinion of some critics that a new English literary drama of high value is in process of evolution.

The new era began in the eighteen-nineties, and seems to have received its initial impulse from the introduction of Ibsen's plays in the London theatres, on the one hand, and from the revival of interest in the study of old Irish literature, on the other. For several generations before this the English theatres were quite generally given over to French imitations or adaptations that pleased a certain public but offered no encouragement for original composition. To be sure, there were scattered attempts and sporadic successes, as in the cases of Tennyson and Swinburne, but,

generally speaking, these plays were but little read and never popular on the stage. There is, indeed, one notable exception in the plays of Oscar Wilde, which succeeded through wit and brilliance of style rather than through merit as literary drama.

In 1893 six of Ibsen's plays were produced on the London stage and became instantly popular. George Bernard Shaw at once began to try his hand at the same kind of thing, and Henry Arthur Jones and Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, already quite well established as playwrights, attempted to give an Ibsen flavor to some of their subsequent plays. The later plays of Ibsen are written in prose and are professedly didactic in tone. The primary purpose of Ibsen was to work a change in the conventional moral attitude of the society of his time, and to this end he constructed his plays. His subjects are usually taken from the extreme or eccentric phases of human life, and his themes are concerned with experience aside from the main current of orthodox ethics. This kind of thing was especially welcome to Mr. Shaw, as it provided an outlet for his radical dissatisfaction with things as they are and suggested a way to the popularity he coveted. During the following twenty years he produced a considerable number of plays, both serious and comic,

wherein his chief aim is to "show up" the accepted and presumably established institutions and beliefs of modern society.

Mr. Galsworthy followed Mr. Shaw in his attempt to write plays of the same temper as Ibsen's prose dramas. Like Ibsen and Shaw, he addresses himself primarily to the intellect with a view to instruction and reform. He deals for the most part with problems of labor, of marriage, of social justice, etc., as they immediately present themselves for solution. It is needless to say that our own generation is especially sensitive about such matters, and when they are treated by a master playwright, as Mr. Galsworthy is, they are bound to be effective on the stage at least. But it is highly questionable whether any artist could produce work of lasting value on themes of such local and temporal interest.

Much, too, of the dramatic work of Mr. Granville Barker and Mr. Masefield belongs to the Ibsen tradition. It is written in prose and is realistic in its treatment of extreme or unusual situations in modern society.

Although of earlier date than the introduction of Ibsen as a force in English drama, the Irish Revival did not produce plays until a few years later. The avowed purpose of the Irish movement is to revive interest in old Irish literature,

and to develop a manner of literary expression peculiarly Irish. William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, and John Millington Synge are the outstanding dramatists of the movement. Generally speaking, their dramatic work is concerned with old Irish themes or with peculiar traits of Irish life as it manifests itself in unusual situations or out-of-the-way places. The aim of these writers is fine art, and in the main they have produced the most artistic drama of our day. It is impossible to find anything better in contemporary drama than Synge's "Riders to the Sea," "Deirdre of the Sorrows," "The Well of the Saints," and "The Playboy of the Western World." Lady Gregory is not primarily a dramatist, but her one-act farces and dialogues are always effective. Yeats is always artistic, but his genius is primarily lyrical, and he has a tendency at times to make his dramas oversymbolical.

There are other contemporary English dramatists whose work does not belong to either group mentioned above. Most notable among these are Stephen Phillips and Sir James Barrie. In "Paolo and Francesca," Phillips produced a tragedy of the old classic type, and was hailed as the creator of a new poetical drama. However, his poetic talent is more especially lyrical, and he could not withstand the competition of the Ibsen

realists. His later work is in prose and somewhat in their manner. Sir James Barrie is especially strong in the portrayal of sentimental humor. He is at his best in fanciful fairy-tales, most notably "Peter Pan."

For the most part, contemporary American drama is not literary; it is intended for the stage alone. It was not written to be read, and it makes dull reading. However, there are a few exceptions in the plays of Clyde Fitch, William Vaughn Moody, Percy Mackaye, and perhaps those of Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy. While none of these plays are great drama from the point of view of literature, yet some of them, like "Beau Brummel," "The Truth," "The Great Divide," and "The Scarecrow" are readable, and often show strong character creation and fine bits of humor.

On the whole, it seems that the general tendency of contemporary English drama is away from literature. It is being produced in great quantities, and much of it is quite successful on the stage, but very little of it makes good reading as literature. It lacks the finer qualities of written style that characterized the older English drama at its best, and it is usually too much concerned with themes of momentary interest to have abiding charm or value. It seldom survives the test of rereading; it is deficient in passion and

imaginative insight that grow on one with each fresh perusal of the text.

Since humor is largely dependent upon time and place, the drama of to-day is, perhaps, most successful in its light and comic plays. But even most of these can hardly be said to excite the quality and degree of intellectual activity that makes high comedy in a play when read. Tragedy in the true sense is conspicuously rare, and the serious problem play or the play of radical eccentric criticism of contemporary manners, while it may be intense enough for an evening at the theatre, is seldom of profound enough significance to engage the thoughtful attention of the quiet reader.

CHAPTER X

APPRECIATION AND VALUES

In popular usage the words criticise and criticism have come to have an uncongenial, if not disagreeable, atmosphere about them. Common parlance has so restricted the application of these words until by the general mind, unless otherwise explained, they are understood to mean faultfinding. Faultfinding is never a very respectable occupation, and, although it is a legitimate business, yet they are considered the more honorable who do not engage in it. But quite often popular usage lacks flexibility and variety. It is likely to become set upon one meaning, when considerable range of choice might be equally possible or even probable. Criticism does mean faultfinding, but it means other qualities of experience with equal clearness and propriety. It helps somewhat to say that criticism means pointing out merits as well as faults, but this leaves us still with only a partial or a crippled notion of all that criticism may and should include.

Criticism in the broadest sense means the full, complete reaction of the mind or soul to what-

ever engages its serious attention. It involves all of the faculties of human experience functioning separately and together. In its fullest signification criticism is seldom practised; we find it easier and more convenient to restrict our attention to some particular phase of experience, and, by ignoring all others, act as if they were not. In the simpler business and affairs of men we are prone to estimate the value of work according to how well or how ill it accomplishes the end it sets out to achieve. But in a complex undertaking of any kind the one grand success is made up of many ends, the separate achievement of which gives to the whole enterprise many different values. So it is that the critic cannot limit himself to pointing out faults or merits; but in estimating the value of any work he must consider every phase of meaning that the work is capable of bringing to experience.

Literary criticism means, of course, the application of the critical attitude and method to literature. Literature being the artistic expression in language of the richest and most complicated forms of human experience, literary criticism involves a curiously complex form of mental activity. It is easy enough to assume a critical attitude toward what we read, but to assume the proper critical attitude toward reading-matter of

literary merit is not so easy. Almost any attitude may be called a critical attitude, and whatever we may say or think about what we read is in some sense criticism. If I say I like a book, or I do not like it, I am criticising it. The very fact that I read it is some evidence that it has my approval. But it does not require very shrewd judgment to understand that such meagre, often slight, comment can have but little value as criticism. It tells us nothing about the book, and but little more about the one who has read it.

Literary criticism of the "I like it" or "I do not like it" type is usually too personal and almost always too easily rendered to be of much value. To be sure, personal taste always enters into criticism; even the soundest critic cannot conceal his likes and dislikes, but he is not content with merely stating them. He knows that taste is relative, depending upon many circumstances and conditions, and that a book may have value apart from its power to please him at some particular time in some special mood. He knows that he must account for his state of mind in reading, that he must analyze what is going on in his experience and exhibit the simple elements of the compound. He must ask not only what his attitude is, but why it is as it is.

It is seldom easy to tell why we like or do not

like a book, especially if the book has any degree of merit. Often we are unwilling to ask ourselves the question, because it is likely to lead to disturbing revelations or unwilling confessions. Ignorance, prejudice, narrow sympathy, partisanship, and similar undesirable attributes are ever near at hand as plausible explanation of the cause of our state of mind. If I do not like a book, it may not be due to any fault in the book. Furthermore, books are seldom addressed to any one person or critic. They may be addressed to a very limited public or to men in general, or to no public at all. No doubt, many things of high literary value have been written solely for the inner joy of the one who wrote them. To say I do not like such books is aside from the purpose. They were not written for us.

The business of the critic is to understand the nature of the work before him, and to estimate its value not only to himself but as a book. The question of meaning should always be uppermost in his mind, and meaning must be interpreted with considerable freedom; meaning to the critic, to readers in general, and to the author. Nor must the critic limit meaning to thought alone, for in art of any kind emotion and imagination are as significant as reason, and if the writer does not bring us knowledge, he may arouse the emotions,

and so add value to what is already known. To the work as a whole and to all of its parts, even to the least detail, the critic should apply the questions so appropriately stated by Coleridge: What has the author tried to do? How has he tried to do it? Was it worth doing? With these questions ever before him, and an honesty of purpose in his method, the young critic and student of literature is not likely to wander from the aim of his study, or, if he does, he will not go so far astray.

The questions just stated involve three phases of experience fundamental in all criticism: interpretation, appreciation, and judgment. To know what the author of a book has tried to do means that through the book we must come to have the same experiences as the author had in writing. Somehow we must by means of words translate his experience into our own. This is the first business of criticism, and until this is accomplished the critic can proceed no farther. Critical interpretation includes a considerable variety of questions and directs attention to many matters of detail.

In the first place, interpretation is concerned with text. Often, to be sure, at least with contemporary literature, the question of text is of slight importance, for if the author is still living,

it is his business to see that his work is given to us as he would have it. But with older books that have been reprinted many times, or copied in longhand before the days of printing, the question of text is of the greatest importance. There is no use to talk of meaning until we are sure that we have before us what the author wrote. Making critical texts is the business of scholars and requires a fund of special, often highly technical, information that is not possible for the young student. For the tyro, textual criticism must be limited to mastery of what is on the page before him. This involves matters of diction, grammar, and rhetorical form. Indifference or indolence in these matters cannot be tolerated, and the value of student criticism very often is determined by the minuteness of detail with which he has attended to the text of what he reads.

Interpretation becomes historical when the text requires a knowledge of history in some form for its full intelligibility. Usage in language changes; the same words have a different significance at different stages in the growth of language and literature. For literary interpretation it is not enough to know what words and phrases mean to-day, we must know what they meant when they were written. It is folly to read the pronouns in Shakespeare's plays according to

present-day usage, or to expect his grammar to follow the rules of agreement usually taught in the schools of our time. Half-educated ministers of the Gospel who take their texts from the King James version of the Bible often go wofully wrong in their interpretations, because they read into their texts meanings that the language did not have at the time when the translation of the Bible was made.

Language does not change alone, but most things human are constantly varying. Every age, almost every generation, has its own superstitions, its own science, its own philosophy. Social conventions in the days of Chaucer, ghosts and spiritualism in the days of Shakespeare, must be understood before we can read the works of these authors aright. The belief in Calvinistic predestination colored all the thinking and the writing of the Puritans. We cannot say what a writer means until we know what the language he used meant to him and to those to whom he addressed it. On the other hand, much contemporary literature has only a historical value. It is concerned only with matters peculiar to our own time, and it must be estimated accordingly. Contemporary fiction especially is likely to be of value locally and just for the year or generation. In every sense the literary critic must evaluate

his reading historically before he can come to any clear understanding of its meaning.

Biography is of no less importance to the interpretative critic than is history. Often the meaning of literature is peculiarly related to some incident or event in the life of the author. "Sartor Resartus" may have a meaning for any intelligent reader, even if he knows nothing at all about the author, but an intimate acquaintance with the life of Carlyle gives the book a far richer significance to any reader. "In Memoriam" cannot be thoroughly understood without knowing the course of Tennyson's life up to the time it was published. So we might take the work of any writer and find how much of what it means comes to us only after we have a full knowledge of the many incidents that make up the life of the author.

Psychology, too, plays a part in interpretative criticism. The peculiar constitution and working of the author's mind throw light on the nature of his literary work. Poe's gift for solving puzzles made him a master of plot in story-writing. But Poe lacked the power of vivid imaginative conception. His characters are only names to serve the needs of his plots, and his pictures are indefinite, wanting in both unity and coherence; they lack composition and are hard to visualize.

Poe had a keen sense of rhythm and a delicate appreciation of tone-quality. For him language was primarily a sound experience, and poetry lay very near the border-line of music. Scott cared very little for music, and we search his poetry in vain for the subtle effects of tone that give charm and meaning to the poetry of Poe. Dickens was not so logical as Poe. For him there was little or no charm in a syllogism. But he possessed what Poe lacked—the power of definite and vivid characterization. His characters are superior to his plots. They are interesting as people, even in spite of the fact that the author at times becomes oversentimental about them. By personality I suppose we mean the peculiar make-up of the individual. Whatever this may be, it is difficult to account for; but it enters into all of the author's work and gives some shade of color to its meaning.

Finally, the interpretative critic must concern himself with the writer's philosophy. Every one, at least every one who is thoughtful enough and studious enough to write books, must assume some attitude toward life and the world in which he lives. The writer may not in all cases have arrived at his position by conscious effort or method; he may not even have formulated many of his notions of what goes on about him; quite often

he has not related his ideas and organized them into a system; but whether the writer does this for himself or not, it must be done by the critic before he can fully comprehend the meaning of what is before him.

To be sure, many lighter things in literature, as in all art, may be indifferent to philosophy; that is, they would be the same no matter what the writer believed about himself and his fellows. But the mightier things in literature must be influenced by the writer's general attitude and way of thinking. Pure delight of the senses, or what is addressed to feeling alone, may have little or no dependence upon thought setting; but when the author would move us through a representation of the real or ideal world, we must be concerned with the validity and justice of the world represented. A love-song by Burns or a bit of verbal music may have no relation to the Christian miracles or the doctrine of evolution; but from a single point of view it is not possible to grasp the significance of "Dover Beach" and "The Song of Pippa":

> "God's in his heaven
> All's right with the world."

Neither can one reconcile in the same world Browning's poems on death and the story of the

Crucifixion. Here it is necessary to fit the ideas into a complete system of the universe and evaluate the piece of writing by the validity and plausibility of the general view of things to which it belongs. This is no easy task, but it is the culminating process of literary interpretation.

Literary appreciation is for the most part a matter of form. It represents the reader's response not so much to what the author has done as to how he has done it. Here again let me say it is not possible finally to make a sharp distinction between form and content. But literary appreciation is the quality of experience that comes to us through a lively sensitiveness to whatever makes style in writing. It is idle to speak of words apart from their meaning, but an additional meaning is given to words by arrangement, and response to this something added is our appreciation. The music of language, rhythm and tone-quality; the subtle juxtaposition of imagery in figurative speech; symmetry and proportion in arrangement; proper distribution of emphasis; appropriateness of form to material — these are the qualities of literature that arouse appreciation. To appreciate means to recognize the value of and to point out wherein the value resides.

Literary appreciation is the first qualification

of the critic. Not to be moved by writing of literary merit is conclusive evidence that no clear interpretation or just evaluation of literature is possible. If we are not moved by the recognized masterpieces of literature, by the classics in the various literary forms, we are in no way qualified as critics. All we can do is state our peculiar excentricity, our personal lack of appreciation, and this is of little importance to any one.

In this, as in most other human characteristics, few, if any, are perfect and few are hopelessly deficient. Few even of the noted critics have had equal power of appreciating all forms of literature. One may be keenly alive to the charms of poetry but have little or no response to the essay or the novel. And while one may be an excellent critic of the drama, it does not follow that the same critic has any appreciation of the lyric or the epic. Often lack of appreciation is due to ignorance; in such cases the only hope is in study. No doubt, there are also cases of inherent weakness, native inability. For such it seems there is no hope. But the whole question of acquiring literary appreciation is still open; and it is safe, if we have the desire, to try by constant effort, by putting ourselves in the atmosphere of what is best in poetry, in drama, in fiction, to awaken genuine response or to increase whatever joy we

have in the strongest appeal that the human soul has made to its fellows.

Judgment is the last stage in the critical process. It is an attempt to answer the question "Was the thing worth while?" The office of judge in any department of life is difficult to fill. It requires sanity of mind, maturity of experience, and copious information. Judgment implies standards, and worthy legitimate standards are possible only when there is thorough familiarity with the field of experience, human effort, and achievement in which they are to be applied.

The judicial critic of literature must have a lively sense of appreciation, disciplined and refined through reading and study. Before the critic can pass final judgment on the worth of a book, a poem, a novel, or a play he must thoroughly understand what the author has tried to do, and weigh it in the balance with other attempts at the same or nearly related aims. To be a judge of dogs or cattle, one must know dogs and cattle and the purposes to which they are destined. Likewise, to be a judge of the value of poetry or novels, one must be familiar with the best that has been done in these types of literature. It is not enough that a piece of literature brings me experience of a peculiar quality, I must compare it with analogous experiences excited by

other literature and note wherein it equals, surpasses, or falls short of what other writers have been able to do. Furthermore, the judicial critic must know life. He must have shared the intense experience it is the purpose of literature to represent. He must know men, and feel at home with them, no matter where they may go. Science, philosophy, history, as well as art, are his estates, and he must cultivate them all if he hopes to be a master in the peculiar art that utilizes whatever is at hand as material.

Interpretation, appreciation, and judgment, then, constitute what we mean by criticism. They are the qualities of experience through which we arrive at whatever attitude we may assume toward literature. But we must not conclude that these forms of mental activity function simply and separately, or that they follow one another in regular order. We have seen above that all human experience is complex, and criticism is no exception. Literary interpretation, appreciation, and judgment function together and react one upon the other. Judgment directs and clarifies interpretation, and is in turn swayed by it. Appreciation depends upon meaning, and powerful emotion may even lead to a judicial estimate contrary to what seems clearly in the path of reason.

Since criticism involves high and difficult forms

of experience, literary criticism of fine quality is not possible to many. There are only a few outstanding names in the history of literary criticism. But all who have a love for good books and a willingness to undergo the labor and sustained effort of discipline necessary to success in this field of work may hope for a just reward in the satisfaction that comes from increasing ability to exercise intelligent, discriminating judgment in the selection of better reading-matter within their range of comprehension and appreciation.

SUGGESTED STUDIES

I. THE ESSAY

1

Of Superstition

It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely: and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: Surely, saith he, I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man at all as Plutarch, than that they should say that there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born; as the poets speak of Saturn. And, as the contumely is greater toward God, so the danger is greater toward men. Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. Therefore, atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new primum mobile that ravisheth all the spheres of government. The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstition wise men follow fools; and arguments are fitted to practice in a reversed order. It was gravely said by some of the prelates in the Council of Trent, where the doctrine of the schoolmen bare great sway, that the schoolmen were like astronomers, which

did feign eccentrics and epicycles, and such engines of orbs to save the phenomena, though they knew there were no such things; and, in like manner, that the schoolmen had framed a number of subtile and intricate axioms and theorems, to save the practice of the church. The causes of superstition are: pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies; excess of outward and pharisaical holiness; overgreat reverence of traditions, which cannot but load the church; the stratagems of prelates for their own ambition and lucre; the favoring too much of good intentions, which openeth the gate to conceits and novelties; the taking an aim at divine matters by human, which cannot but breed mixture of imaginations; and, lastly, barbarous times, especially joined with calamities and disasters. Superstition, without a veil, is a deformed thing; for as it addeth deformity to an ape to be so like a man, so the similitude of superstition to religion makes it the more deformed: and as wholesome meat corrupteth to little worms, so good forms and orders corrupt into a number of petty observances. There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go furthest from the superstition formerly received; therefore care would be had that (as it fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer.

FRANCIS BACON.

(*a*) Having read the essay, in what state of mind do you find yourself? Have you been moved, or informed, or both? Has the writer made his appeal through the imagination, or through the statement of fact and abstract logic? Has he made any appeal whatsoever to the emotions? Has he given you any new ideas, or suggested new points of view from which you might consider what was already familiar? Do you find yourself in general agreement or disagreement with the author?

(*b*) Do you find this essay easy reading or difficult? If

difficult, wherein lies the difficulty? Are the words new to you? Are the sentences very complicated? Does the author assume knowledge on your part that you do not have? Is the subject-matter more philosophical than you are accustomed to? Is the kind of mental activity here represented strange or unusual to you?

(*c*) State briefly the meaning of the essay as you now have it. Will any sentence in the essay do this for you? Is Bacon's conception of superstition the same as yours? Study the word as defined in the dictionary. From the essay alone, define Bacon's use of the word. Bacon mentions seven causes of superstition: give specific illustrations of superstitions resulting from the different causes. What does Bacon mean when he says, "Superstition, without a veil, is a deformed thing"? Explain the remaining parts of this same sentence. Do they throw any light on what the author means by veil? Illustrate the author's meaning in these words "There is a superstition in avoiding superstition." For what purpose does he bring in what some said about the prelates in the Council of Trent? What are *eccentrics* and *epicycles*? Explain what the author means by the following expressions: "In all superstition wise men follow fools, and arguments are fitted to practice in a reversed order."

(*d*) Does Bacon mean that with reference to our opinion of God atheism is the only alternative to superstition? How do these two attitudes of mind affect the conduct and behavior of men? Can you cite specific instances to illustrate Bacon's ideas? Is the atheist always tolerant? What is a worthy opinion of God? In what sense is an unworthy notion of God dangerous to men? How is superstition a "reproach of the Deity"? Can there be outward moral virtue without religion?

(*e*) Does this essay give evidence of any ideal attitude or state of mind that the author was contemplating? Is it vividly conceived and sharply outlined, or only dim

and vague? Are you in any way moved by it? Does it in any way affect your notion of what a man should be? Have you any private superstitions? How do they dominate your conduct and behavior? To what extent are you a victim of popular superstition? Is the influence of popular superstition wholesome or not? How can you know?

2

The July Grass

A July fly went sideways over the long grass. His wings made a burr about him like a net, beating so fast they wrapped him round with a cloud. Every now and then, as he flew over the trees of grass, a taller one than common stopped him, and there he clung, and then the eye had time to see the scarlet spots — the loveliest color — on his wings. The wind swung the bennet and loosened his hold, and away he went again over the grasses, and not one jot did he care if they were Poa or Festuca, or Bromus or Hordeum, or any other name. Names were nothing to him; all he had to do was to whirl his scarlet spots about in the brilliant sun, rest when he liked, and go on again. I wonder whether it is a joy to have bright scarlet spots, and to be clad in the purple and gold of life; is the color felt by the creature that wears it? The rose, restful of a dewy morn before the sunbeams have topped the garden-wall, must feel a joy in its own fragrance, and know the exquisite hue of its stained petals. The rose sleeps in its beauty.

The fly whirls his scarlet-spotted wings about and splashes himself with sunlight, like the children on the sands. He thinks not of the grass and sun; he does not heed them at all — and that is why he is so happy — any more than the barefoot children ask why the sea is there, or why it does not quite dry up when it ebbs. He is unconscious; he lives without thinking about living; and if the

sunshine were a hundred hours long, still it would not be long enough. No, never enough of sun and sliding shadows that come like a hand over the table to lovingly reach our shoulder, never enough of the grass that smells sweet as a flower, not if we could live years and years equal in number to the tides that have ebbed and flowed counting backward four years to every day and night, backward still till we found out which came first, the night or the day. The scarlet-dotted fly knows nothing of the names of the grasses that grow here where the sward nears the sea, and thinking of him I have decided not to wilfully seek to learn any more of their names either. My big grass-book I have left at home, and the dust is settling on the gold of the binding. I have picked a handful this morning of which I know nothing. I will sit here on the turf and the scarlet-dotted flies shall pass over me, as if I too were but a grass. I will not think, I will be unconscious, I will live.

Listen! that was the low sound of a summer wavelet striking the uncovered rock over there beneath in the green sea. All things that are beautiful are found by chance, like everything that is good. Here by me is a praying-rug, just wide enough to kneel on, of the richest gold inwoven with crimson. All the sultans of the East never had such beauty as that to kneel on. It is, indeed, too beautiful to kneel on, for the life in these golden flowers must not be broken down even for that purpose. They must not be defaced, not a stem bent; it is more reverent not to kneel on them, for this carpet prays itself. I will sit by it and let it pray for me. It is so common, the bird's-foot lotus, it grows everywhere; yet if I purposely searched for days I should not have found a plot like this, so rich, so golden, so glowing with sunshine. You might pass it by in one stride, yet it is worthy to be thought of for a week and remembered for a year. Slender grasses, branched roundabout with slenderer boughs, each tipped with pollen and rising in tiers cone-shaped — too delicate to grow tall

— cluster at the base of the mound. They dare not grow tall or the wind would snap them. A great grass, stout and thick, rises three feet by the hedge, with a head another foot nearly, very green and strong and bold, lifting itself right up to you; you must say, "What fine grass!" Grasses whose awns succeed each other alternately; grasses whose tops seem flattened; others drooping over the shorter blades beneath; some that you can only find by parting the heavier growth around them; hundreds and hundreds, thousands and thousands. The kingly poppies on the dry summit of the mound take no heed of these, the populace, their subjects so numerous they cannot be numbered. A barren race they are, the proud poppies, lords of the July field, taking no deep root, but raising up a brilliant blazon of scarlet heraldry out of nothing. They are useless, they are bitter, they are allied to sleep and poison and everlasting night; yet they are forgiven because they are not commonplace. Nothing, no abundance of them, can ever make the poppies commonplace. There is genius in them, the genius of color, and they are saved. Even when they take the room of the corn we must admire them. The mighty multitude of nations, the millions and millions of the grass stretching away in intertangled ranks, through pasture and mead from shore to shore, have no kinship with these their lords. The ruler is always a foreigner. From England to China the native-born is no king; the poppies are the Normans of the field. One of these on the mound is very beautiful, a width of petal, a clear silkiness of color three shades higher than the rest — it is almost dark with scarlet. I wish I could do something more than gaze at all this scarlet and gold and crimson and green, something more than see it, not exactly to drink it or inhale it, but in some way to make it part of me that I might live it.

The July grasses must be looked for in corners and out-of-the-way places, and not in the broad acres — the scythe

has taken them there. By the wayside on the banks of the lane, near the gateway — look, too, in uninteresting places behind incomplete buildings on the mounds cast up from abandoned foundations where speculation has been and gone. There weeds that would not have found resting-place elsewhere grow unchecked, and uncommon species and unusually large growths appear. Like everything else that is looked for, they are found under unlikely conditions. At the back of ponds, just inside the enclosure of woods, angles of corn-fields, old quarries, that is where to find grasses, or by the sea in the brackish marsh. Some of the finest of them grow by the mere roadside; you may look for others up the lanes in the deep ruts, look too inside the hollow trees by the stream. In a morning you may easily garner together a great sheaf of this harvest. Cut the larger stems aslant, like the reeds imitated deep in old green glass. You must consider as you gather them the height and slenderness of the stems, the droop and degree of curve, the shape and color of the panicle, the dusting of the pollen, the motion and sway in the wind. The sheaf you may take home with you, but the wind that was among it stays without. RICHARD JEFFERIES.

(*a*) How does the experience of this essay differ from that of Bacon's essay "Of Superstition"? Test it for thought, imagination, feeling, and beauty. Would you call it more or less a matter of mood than Bacon's essay? Is it easier or more difficult to read? Does Jefferies require any specialized knowledge? Is his style imaginative; does he call pictures to the mind? Which of his senses is most alert? Is his diction connotative? Does he use strange words? Do you find yourself at home in Jefferies's mood?

(*b*) Is there a main thought in this essay? If so, can you state it or find it stated in any sentence in the essay? Do the ideas come through reason or through imagination? Cite specific instances. What does the author mean

in the third paragraph when he says all things beautiful and all that is good are found by chance? How does the carpet of flowers pray? What is the notion of life expressed in the last sentence of the second paragraph? Does thought interfere with happiness? Is this essay the expression of systematic thinking? Is it a part of some general philosophy or scheme of life? If so state the principles of that philosophy? Do you accept them as true?

(*c*) Go through the essay and pick out the striking images. Which senses are represented? Is one more vivid than the others? Are the images beautiful? Is there anything ugly in the essay? Note the figures of speech. What do the words "purple and gold of life" mean to you? What does the last sentence of the first paragraph mean? Make a careful analysis of the simile with which the second paragraph begins. What is suggested by "praying-rug" and "sultans of the East?" Explain, "the poppies are the Normans of the field."

(*d*) What is the prevailing emotional tone of the essay? Is the feeling sensuous or emotional? Point out instances of either or both. Is the quality and intensity of feeling constant or shifting? Is it ever passionate? Is the degree of feeling justified by the thought and imagery?

(*e*) Does this essay give evidence of the presence of an ideal? If so try to express what the ideal is? Does the author contemplate his ideal with warmth and enthusiasm? Is the meaning of life expressed in this essay true and complete? What adverse criticism can you offer? What do the two essays tell us about their respective authors?

II. THE LYRIC

1

Spring

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear ay birds tune this merry lay,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!
Spring! the sweet Spring!

T. NASH.

(*a*) Upon first reading what is your primary interest or delight in the poem? Is it thoughtful, imaginative, emotional? Does the rhythm of the poem appeal to you? Is it musical? Do you find yourself carried away by the music of the language so that you give no heed whatever to any thought meaning? Note the form of stanza. What is the purpose and effect of the fifth line in the last stanza? Is it a repetition of the first half of the first line of the poem? Do you read these two passages alike? What different meanings do they express? What is the effect of the refrain? It should be read to imitate the songs of birds. Note the rhyme scheme. Are the rhymes all perfect? Is there any discord at the end of the second line of the last stanza? Scan the poem. Is the rhythm regular? Is it harmonious? What kind of meter do you call this?

Note the number of monosyllabic words and the kind of vowel sounds. Are there any harsh combinations of consonants? If this poem were to be set to music and sung as a solo, to which voice would you give it? Give reasons for your answer to the last question.

(*b*) Note the image-bearing words in the poem. Is the imagery sensuous? What senses are appealed to? To which is the appeal strongest? Has the poet made any attempt to bring into the mind together images of the human and images of the lower forms of life and of mere things? Point out specific instances. How does such juxtaposition of images affect both thought and feeling? Note especially the second line of each stanza. What is the connotation of these lines separately and together? Do these lines in any way lead to a different meaning for the last line from what is expressed in the first half of the first line of the poem? Show how the meaning has enlarged. In what sense is the word *king* used in the first line?

(*c*) What is the general emotional tone of the poem? Which images arouse the stronger feeling? Is the feeling even, or does it vary in intensity with the appeal to the different senses? Is the emotional tone of this poem in any way sad or melancholy? Is the feeling aroused by the imagery in harmony with that produced by the rhythm and tone-quality of the language?

(*d*) Read again the discussion of the structure of a lyric in Chapter V. Study the structure of this poem. Does it conform to the plan outlined? Where in the poem is the emotional tension highest? Does the mood pass into quiet meditation? If so, where does this intellectual activity begin? Is the last line of the poem the expression of this quiet meditation? What subject for thought in connection with spring does the poem call to your mind? What is the major idea? Does it in any way suggest the creative power at work in the world? Explain.

2

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent
  Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
  And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
  My true account, lest He returning chide, —
  Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?
I fondly ask: — But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies; God doth not need
  Either man's work, or His own gifts: Who best
    Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state

Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
  And post o'er land and ocean without rest: —
    They also serve who only stand and wait.

JOHN MILTON.

(*a*) What form of sonnet is this? What is its primary appeal? Test it for thought, imagination, emotion. Note the rhyme scheme and the rhythm. Is the poem hard to read? Why? How many sentences in the poem? Analyze the sentences or sentence of the poem; if necessary diagram the whole poem in order that the sentence structure may become perfectly clear. Account for every mark of punctuation. What allusion in lines 3, 4, 5, 6? Does this allusion provide significant imagery? If so, how? Explain the meaning and use of *fondly* in line 8. Is the word *kingly*, line 12, used in the same sense as *king* in line 1 of Nash's poem "Spring"? What is the notion of God, and of man's relation to God, expressed in this poem? Does this ideal stimulate or quiet Milton's passion? What effect has it on you? How does this conception of life

agree with the conventional notion of service? Explain in detail the meaning of lines 9, 10, 14.

(*b*) Is this poem emotional? Is there any appeal to the senses? What is the general quality of feeling? Is the poem reverential? Is emotion raised to the state of sublimity? Explain your answer. Is the emotion justified by the thought? In what sense is this poem imaginative?

3

The Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
  Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
  Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
  More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
  Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
  Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
  And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
  As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
  And o'er the sickle bending;
I listen'd, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

(*a*) Read the poem aloud until you can hear the sound of the words as you repeat them to yourself. Is the rhythm regular? Does it carry you along without effort and even without consciousness of thought? What kind of meter is this? Note the rhyme scheme; is it ever violated? At the first reading does the poem mean much more than pleasure in the music of language? Test for thought, imagination, emotion. Are the ideas logically or imaginatively related? Does the poet hear the words of the song the girl is singing? Why is the strain melancholy? What is the force of the third line in the first stanza, and of the fifth line of the last stanza?

(*b*) Select the major images of the poem: the girl singing alone at her work in the harvest field; the nightingale heard by travellers on the desert; the cuckoo singing on the smallest and loneliest island of the sea; ancient battles and primitive songs of suffering and disappointment; pain and sorrow inherent in present-day life. Make these images as vivid and concrete as possible; keep them in mind together. Is there a common element in all of these that unifies the mood and points back into the very heart of life in the world? In Matthew Arnold's poem "Philomela," he speaks of hearing "Eternal passion! Eternal pain!" Is it this in the Reaper's song that touches a common chord in the poet that finds expression in the poem? Did the poet recognize that the song of the Reaper called

him out of himself into the deep currents of common life that reach across the ages and bind humanity together and make man brother to all living things? Do you recognize this too? Do the images have a sameness in them that makes harmony when brought together? Does this explain line 4, stanza 1, and line 5, stanza 4? Does the poet feel that he is on holy ground in the presence of what is sacred? Does he recognize in the melancholy strain the changeless voice of Eternal God? Could he represent all of this to you in strait logic as well as he has done it through imagination? Explain your answer.

(*c*) Does this poem represent a higher order of emotion than Nash's "Spring?" Explain your answer. Is the emotion stronger with some images than with others? Where in the poem is the feeling most intense? Is there ever discord between the feeling aroused by the rhythm and that which accompanies the images? Is the tone-quality always in harmony with both? Is there anything ugly or repulsive in the poem? Do the words ever connote anything unpleasant?

(*d*) Again referring to Chapter V, study the structure of this poem. Does it agree with Professor Erskine's outline? Where does the intellectual reaction begin? What is the nature of meditation that this poem brings to mind? Does the poem imply or suggest any ideal conception of the world and life? If so, try to state what that conception is.

III. THE SHORT STORY

1

A Lickpenny Lover

There were 3,000 girls in the Biggest Store. Masie was one of them. She was eighteen and a saleslady in the gents' gloves. Here she became versed in two varieties of human beings — the kind of gents who buy their gloves

in department-stores and the kind of women who buy gloves for unfortunate gents. Besides this wide knowledge of the human species, Masie had acquired other information. She had listened to the promulgated wisdom of the 2,999 other girls, and had stored it in a brain that was as secretive and wary as that of a Maltese cat. Perhaps nature, foreseeing that she would lack wise counsellors, had mingled the saving ingredient of shrewdness along with her beauty, as she has endowed the silver fox of the priceless fur above the other animals with cunning.

For Masie was beautiful. She was a deep-tinted blonde, with the calm poise of a lady who cooks butter-cakes in a window. She stood behind her counter in the Biggest Store, and as you closed your hand over the tape-line for your glove measure you thought of Hebe; and as you looked again you wondered how she had come by Minerva's eyes.

When the floorwalker was not looking Masie chewed tutti-frutti; when he was looking she gazed up as if at the clouds and smiled wistfully.

That is the shop-girl smile, and I enjoin you to shun it unless you are well fortified with callosity of the heart, caramels, and a congeniality for the capers of cupid. This smile belonged to Masie's recreation hours and not to the store; but the floorwalker must have his own. He is the Shylock of the stores. When he comes nosing around, the bridge of his nose is a toll-bridge. It is googoo eyes or "git" when he looks toward a pretty girl. Of course, not all floorwalkers are thus. Only a few days ago the papers printed news of one over eighty years of age.

One day Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, traveller, poet, automobilist, happened to enter the Biggest Store. It is due to him to add that his visit was not voluntary. Filial duty took him by the collar and dragged him inside, while his mother philandered among the bronze and terra-cotta statuettes.

Carter strolled across to the glove-counter in order to shoot a few minutes on the wing. His need for gloves was genuine; he had forgotten to bring a pair with him. But his action hardly calls for apology, because he had never heard of glove-counter flirtations.

As he neared the vicinity of his fate he hesitated, suddenly conscious of this unknown phase of cupid's less worthy profession.

Three or four cheap fellows, sonorously garbed, were leaning over the counters, wrestling with the mediatorial hand-coverings, while giggling girls played vivacious seconds to their lead upon the strident string of coquetry. Carter would have retreated, but he had gone too far. Masie confronted him behind her counter with a questioning look in eyes as coldly, beautifully, warmly blue as the glint of summer sunshine on an iceberg drifting in Southern seas.

And then Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, etc., felt a warm flush rise to his aristocratically pale face. But not from diffidence. The blush was intellectual in origin. He knew in a moment that he stood in the ranks of the ready-made youths who wooed the giggling girls at other counters. Himself leaned against the oaken trysting-place of a cockney cupid with a desire in his heart for the favor of a glove salesgirl. He was no more than Bill and Jack and Mickey. And then he felt a sudden tolerance for them, and an elating, courageous contempt for the conventions upon which he had fed, and an unhesitating determination to have this perfect creature for his own.

When the gloves were paid for and wrapped Carter lingered for a moment. The dimples at the corners of Masie's damask mouth deepened. All gentlemen who bought gloves lingered in just that way. She curved an arm, showing like Psyche's through her shirt-waist sleeve, and rested an elbow upon the show-case edge.

Carter had never before encountered a situation of which

he had not been perfect master. But now he stood far more awkward than Bill or Jack or Mickey. He had no chance of meeting this beautiful girl socially. His mind struggled to recall the nature and habits of shop-girls as he had read or heard of them. Somehow he had received the idea that they sometimes did not insist too strictly upon the regular channels of introduction. His heart beat loudly at the thought of proposing an unconventional meeting with this lovely and virginal being. But the tumult in his heart gave him courage.

After a few friendly and well-received remarks on general subjects, he laid his card by her hand on the counter.

"Will you please pardon me," he said, "if I seem too bold; but I earnestly hope you will allow me the pleasure of seeing you again. There is my name; I assure you that it is with the greatest respect that I ask the favor of becoming one of your fr—— acquaintances. May I not hope for the privilege?"

Masie knew men — especially men who buy gloves. Without hesitation she looked him frankly and smilingly in the eyes, and said:

"Sure. I guess you're all right. I don't usually go out with strange gentlemen, though. It ain't quite ladylike. When should you want to see me again?"

"As soon as I may," said Carter. "If you would allow me to call at your home, I ——"

Masie laughed musically. "Oh, gee, no!" she said, emphatically. "If you could see our flat once! There's five of us in three rooms. I'd just like to see ma's face if I was to bring a gentleman-friend there!"

"Anywhere, then," said the enamoured Carter, "that will be convenient to you."

"Say," suggested Masie, with a bright-idea look in her peach-blow face; "I guess Thursday night will about suit me. Suppose you come to the corner of Eighth Avenue and Forty-eighth Street at 7.30. I live right near the

corner. But I've got to be back home by eleven. Ma never lets me stay out after eleven."

Carter promised gratefully to keep the tryst, and then hastened to his mother, who was looking about for him to ratify her purchase of a bronze Diana.

A salesgirl, with small eyes and an obtuse nose, strolled near Masie, with a friendly leer.

"Did you make a hit with his nobs, Masie?" she asked, familiarly.

"The gentleman asked permission to call," answered Masie, with the grand air, as she slipped Carter's card into the bosom of her waist.

"Permission to call!" echoed small eyes, with a snigger. "Did he say anything about dinner in the Waldorf and a spin in his auto afterward?"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Masie, wearily. "You've been used to swell things, I don't think. You've had a swelled head ever since that hose-cart driver took you out to a chop suey joint. No, he never mentioned the Waldorf; but there's a Fifth Avenue address on his card, and if he buys the supper you can bet your life there won't be no pigtail on the waiter what takes the order."

As Carter glided away from the Biggest Store with his mother in his electric runabout, he bit his lip with a dull pain at his heart. He knew that love had come to him for the first time in all the twenty-nine years of his life. And that the object of it should make so readily an appointment with him at a street-corner, though it was a step toward his desires, tortured him with misgivings.

Carter did not know the shop-girl. He did not know that her home is often either a scarcely habitable tiny room, or a domicile filled to overflowing with kith and kin. The street-corner is her parlor; the park is her drawing-room; the avenue is her garden-walk; yet for the most part she is as inviolate mistress of herself in them as is my lady inside her tapestried chamber.

One evening at dusk, two weeks after their first meeting, Carter and Masie strolled arm-in-arm into a little, dimly lit park. They found a bench, tree-shadowed and secluded, and sat there.

For the first time his arm stole gently around her. Her golden-bronze head slid restfully against his shoulder.

"Gee!" sighed Masie, thankfully. "Why didn't you ever think of that before?"

"Masie," said Carter, earnestly, "you surely know that I love you. I ask you sincerely to marry me. You know me well enough by this time to have no doubts of me. I want you, and I must have you. I care nothing for the difference in our stations."

"What is the difference?" asked Masie, curiously.

"Well, there isn't any," said Carter, quickly, "except in the minds of foolish people. It is in my power to give you a life of luxury. My social position is beyond dispute, and my means are ample."

"They all say that," remarked Masie. "It's the kid they all give you. I suppose you really work in a delicatessen or follow the races. I ain't as green as I look."

"I can furnish you all the proofs you want," said Carter, gently, "and I want you, Masie. I loved you the first day I saw you."

"They all do," said Masie, with an amused laugh, "to hear 'em talk. If I could meet a man that got stuck on me the third time he'd seen me I think I'd get mashed on him."

"Please don't say such things," pleaded Carter. "Listen to me, dear. Ever since I first looked into your eyes you have been the only woman in the world for me."

"Oh, ain't you the kidder!" smiled Masie. "How many other girls did you ever tell that?"

But Carter persisted. And at length he reached the flimsy, fluttering little soul of the shop-girl that existed somewhere deep down in her lovely bosom. His words

penetrated the heart whose very lightness was its safest armor. She looked up at him with eyes that saw. And a warm glow visited her cool cheeks. Tremblingly, awfully, her moth wings closed, and she seemed about to settle upon the flower of love. Some faint glimmer of life and its possibilities on the other side of her glove-counter dawned upon her. Carter felt the change and crowded the opportunity.

"Marry me, Masie," he whispered softly, "and we will go away from this ugly city to beautiful ones. We will forget work and business, and life will be one long holiday. I know where I should take you — I have been there often. Just think of a shore where summer is eternal, where the waves are always rippling on the lovely beach and the people are happy and free as children. We will sail to those shores and remain there as long as you please. In one of those far-away cities there are grand and lovely palaces and towers full of beautiful pictures and statues. The streets of the city are water, and one travels about in ——"

"I know," said Masie, sitting up suddenly. "Gondolas."

"Yes," smiled Carter.

"I thought so," said Masie.

"And then," continued Carter, "we will travel on and see whatever we wish in the world. After the European cities we will visit India and the ancient cities there, and ride on elephants and see the wonderful temples of the Hindoos and Brahmins, and the Japanese gardens and the camel-trains and chariot races in Persia; and all the queer sights of foreign countries. Don't you think you would like it, Masie?"

Masie rose to her feet.

"I think we had better be going home," she said, coolly. "It's getting late."

Carter humored her. He had come to know her varying, thistle-down moods, and that it was useless to com-

bat them. But he felt a certain happy triumph. He had held for a moment, though but by a silken thread, the soul of his wild Psyche, and hope was stronger within him. Once she had folded her wings and her cool hand had closed about his own.

At the Biggest Store the next day Masie's chum, Lulu, waylaid her in an angle of the counter.

"How are you and your swell friend making it?" she asked.

"Oh, him?" said Masie, patting her side curls. "He ain't in it any more. Say, Lu, what do you think that fellow wanted me to do?"

"Go on the stage?" guessed Lulu, breathlessly.

"Nit; he's too cheap a guy for that. He wanted me to marry him and go down to Coney Island for a wedding-tour!"

O. HENRY.

(*a*) Is this a story of plot, character, or setting? Does the story depend in any way upon the setting? How might you state the theme of this story? Is this well brought out? If so, in what way? Can you find anything unnecessary to the motive of the story; if so, what? Is Masie portrayed in such a manner that you see her? Is her outward appearance in harmony with her inner life?

(*b*) Are the pictures of the story vivid? Is there anything beautiful or especially pleasing? Anything ugly or offensive? Is the plot logical and plausible? Is the characterization done through comment by the author, through situation, or through dialogue? Is Masie a type or does she have personality? Show how this story is an example of "originality, ingenuity, and compression" discussed in Chapter VIII. Show how it represents a single mood.

(*c*) What is the prevailing emotional effect of the story? Is there any irony or sarcasm? What attitude toward the life and people it represents does this story create in you?

(*d*) Does the story suggest any special lines of thought?

Does it give any information? Does it definitely teach anything? Are you any wiser for having read it? How has it been of value to you?

2

The End of the Path

Set far back in the hills that have thrown their wall of misty purple about the laughing blue of Lake Como, on a sheer cliff three thousand feet above the lake, stands a little weather-stained church. Beneath it lie the two villages of Cadenabbia and Menaggio; behind and up are rank on rank of shadowy mountains, sharply outlined against the sky — the foot-hills leading back to the giant Alps.

The last tiny cream-colored house of the villages stands a full two miles this side of the tortuous path that winds up the face of the chrome-colored cliff. Once a year, in a creeping procession of black-and-white, the natives make a pilgrimage to the little church to pray for rain in the dry season. Otherwise it is rarely visited.

Blagden climbed slowly up the narrow path that stretched like a clean white ribbon from the little group of pastel-colored houses by the water. There was not a breath of wind, not a rustle in the gray-green olive-trees that shimmered silver in the sunlight. Little lizards, sunning themselves on warm flat stones, watched him with brilliant eyes, and darted away to safety as he moved. The shadows of the cypress-trees barred the white path like rungs of a ladder. And Blagden, drinking deep of the beauty of it all, climbed upward.

When he opened the low door of the little chapel the cold of the darkness within was as another barrier. He stepped inside, his footsteps echoing heavily through the shadows, though he walked on tiptoe. After the brilliant sunlight outside he could make out but little of the in-

terior at first. At the far end four candles were burning, and he made his way toward them across the worn floor.

In a cheap, tarnished frame of gilt, above the four flickering pencils of light, hung a picture of the Virgin. Blagden stared at it in amazement. It had evidently been painted by a master-hand. Blagden was no artist; but the face told him that. It was drawn with wonderful appreciation of the woman's sweetness. Perhaps the eyes were what was most wonderful — pitiful, trusting, a little sad, perhaps.

The life-sized figure, draped in smoke-colored blue, blended softly with the dusky shadows, and the flickering candle-light lent a witchery to blurred outlines that half-deceived him — at moments the picture seemed alive. She was smiling a little wistful smile.

And the canvas over the heart of the Virgin was cut in a long, clean stroke — and opened in a disfiguring gash. Beneath it, on a little stand, lay a slim-bladed, vicious knife, covered with dust.

Blagden wonderingly stooped to pick it up — and a voice spoke out of the darkness behind him.

"I would not touch it, signor," it said, and Blagden wheeled guiltily.

A man was standing in the shadow, almost at his elbow.

He was old, the oldest man Blagden had ever seen, and he wore the long brown gown of a monk. His face was like a withered leaf, lined and yellow, and his hair was silver-white.

"Why not?" said Blagden.

The monk stepped forward into the dim light, crossing himself as he passed the picture. He looked hesitatingly at the younger man before him, searching his face with his wonderfully piercing eyes. He seemed to find there what he was searching for, and when he spoke Blagden wondered at the gentleness of his voice.

"There is a story. Would the signor care to hear?"

Blagden nodded, and the two moved back in the shadows a short distance to the front line of little low chairs. Before them, over the dancing light of the four candles, stood the mutilated picture of Mary, beneath it the dust-covered dagger.

And then the withered monk began speaking, and Blagden listened, looking up at the picture.

"It all happened a great many years ago," said the old man; "but I am old, so I remember.

"Rosa was the girl's name. She lived with her father and mother in a little house above Menaggio. And every day in the warm sunlight of the open fields she sang as she watched the goats for the old people, and her voice was like cool water laughing in the shadows of a little brook.

"She was always singing, little Rosa; for she was young, and the sun had never stopped shining for her. People used to call her beautiful.

"And there was Giovanni. Each morning he would pass her home where the yellow roses with the pink hearts grew so sweetly, and always she would blow him a kiss from the little window.

"Then Giovanni would toil with all the strength of his youth, and he too would sing while he toiled; for was it not all for her?

"Often Rosa's goats would stray toward Giovanni's vineyard as dusk came, and they would drive them home together, always laughing, always singing, hand in hand, as the sun slipped golden over the top of the hills across the lake. Sometimes they would walk together in the afterglow, and Giovanni would weave a crown of the little flowers that grew about them, and his princess would wear it, laughing happily.

"They were like two children, signor. There were nights spent together on the lake, when he told her of his dreams, while the gentlest of winds stirred her curls against his

brown cheek, and the moon's wake stretched like a golden pathway from shore to shore.

"They were to be married when the grapes were picked, people used to whisper.

"And then one day a new force came into the girl's life. The church, signor!

"No one understands when or why this comes to a young girl, I think. She was torn with the idea that she should join her church, go into the little nunnery across the lake, and leave the sunshine.

"She did not want to go, and it was a strange yet a beautiful thing. This young, beautiful girl who seemed so much a part of the sunshine and the flowers was to close the door of the church upon it all!

"You are thinking it was strange, signor.

"Giovanni was frantic — you can understand.

"He had dreamed so happily of that which was to be, that now to have the cup snatched from his lips was torture. He took her little sun-kissed hands in his and begged on his knees with tears streaming down his cheeks. And Rosa wept also — but could not answer as he begged. I think she loved the boy, signor. Yet there is something stronger than the love of a boy and a girl.

"She asked for one more night in which to decide. She would come up here to this little church and pray for Mary to guide her. He kissed her cold lips and came away.

"He was a boy, and he never doubted but that she would choose his strong young arms.

"The girl came here. All night she knelt on the rough stone floor, praying and — weeping; for she loved him. And the Virgin above the four candles looked down with the great, wistful eyes you see — and bound the girl's soul faster and faster to her own.

"And when morning came she entered the white walls across the lake without seeing her lover again.

"Giovanni went mad, I think, when they told him. He

screamed out his hate for the world and his God, and rushed up the little white path to where we are sitting now, signor.

"Once here, he drew the dagger you see beneath the Virgin and stabbed with an oath on his lips. That is why I did not let you touch it."

Blagden nodded, and the old monk was silent for a moment before he went on.

"Giovanni disappeared for two days. When he came back his face was that of a madman still. He was met by a white funeral winding up the little path. You understand, signor — a virgin's funeral. Giovanni was hurrying blindly past when they stopped him.

"There was no reproach spoken for what he had done, no bitterness; only a kind of awe — and pity.

"Rosa had died on her knees in the nunnery at the exact time he stabbed yonder picture. And they told him months afterward that her face was strangely like that of the Virgin when they found her — beautiful and pleading and sad. There was no given cause for her death — there are things we cannot understand. She was praying for strength, the sisters said."

The monk ceased speaking, and for a long moment they sat silent, Blagden and the withered, white-haired man, staring mutely up at the beautiful face above them. It was Blagden who broke the silence.

"What do you think happened?" he asked slowly.

"I do not know," said the monk.

There was another pause, then Blagden spoke again.

"Anyway," he said, brushing his hand across his eyes, "she paid in part the debt Giovanni owed his God."

"Yes?" said the monk softly. "I wonder, signor! For I am Giovanni."

NEWBOLD NOYES.

(*a*) Would you call this a story of plot, of character, or of setting? Study the story for each element. State

the general theme of the story. Is the setting appropriate to the theme? Is it necessary? Is the plot intensified by suspense or surprise? If so, where and in what way? How are the characters portrayed, by direct description and narrative, or through dialogue and situation?

(*b*) Does the story arouse the experience of the beautiful? If so, how? Is there anything ugly in the pictures presented? Is the style highly figurative, or not? Do the similes describing the appearance of the old man give vividness to the picture? Are the details of the story selected and presented for unity of effect? Explain. What is the effect?

(*c*) What is the general emotional tone of the story? Is it vivid and intense, or vague and subdued? How does the author achieve his purpose in this respect? Does the story please or displease? Could it have ended any other way? What debt did Giovanni owe his God?

(*d*) What thought does the story suggest? Is the story didactic? Does it give any deep insight into human life? Compare this story with "A Lickpenny Lover," by O. Henry, as examples of the artistic modern short story.

IV. THE EPIC

Sohrab and Rustum

(*a*) Read the poem through, preferably without intermission, for the story. If you do not hear the words as you read silently, read passages aloud that you may become aware of the sound of the language. Read slowly marking the rhythm and the wave-like flow of sound over the heavy and light syllables and words. Remember the epic is never in a hurry; we must take time and give full expression to the music, noting the pauses and the shifting tempo among the long and short vowels. Be careful to give every letter, especially every vowel, its full sound and proper quality and pitch. The epic is in-

tended to be chanted or recited; its appeal is to the ear; the music is half of the poetry. Note how the intensity of feeling changes with the beauty of tone-quality. When you have mastered the rhythm until it comes easily, read from "Paradise Lost" and Bryant's translation of the "Iliad." In this way you will come to appreciate the English epic rhythm.

Note that the story is told partly by the author in person and partly by the characters. Do you note any difference in style among the speeches of the different characters and what the author speaks in person? Does the poem contain any matter not necessary to the story? Is the story logically told? Does it seem to have a meaning as a whole? If so, what is this meaning? Is there any intimation that the incidents here related were due to powers or forces not under the control of men? The poem deals with legend or history; is there any evidence that what happens seems to have been foreordained? What interpretation of life does the poem suggest? Would you rather have had Sohrab victorious? Why ? Does the poem impress you with the strength or the weakness of humanity? Explain.

(*b*) Is the plot of the story definitely motivated? Is there a decided cause and effect relationship among the incidents? What power seems to dominate and control the action? Would you call the plot tragic, or comic, or neither? Explain your answer. Could you be satisfied with any other conclusion? Explain.

(*c*) Is there any intimation that supernatural powers are playing a part in the events related? Cite specific instances. Are Sohrab and Rustum men or supermen? Do they behave like men? Is Ruksh an ordinary horse? Is the plot motivated by the characters? Are they responsible for what happens? Who is guilty for what happens? Are the characters clearly drawn as individuals? Is this an affair of persons or of races and nations? Are your

sympathies with Sohrab or with Rustum? Which is the better man? What decides the contest?

(*d*) Is the setting appropriate to the story? Is nature in sympathy with what is going on? Does the setting change to suit specific incidents? Illustrate. What is the purpose and effect of the closing passage about the river?

(*e*) Note carefully the epithets, figures, and descriptive passages. Study especially the long similes. Does the imagery thus provided clarify the thought, or intensify the feeling, or both? Make a special study of several of the best similes. Are the physical characteristics of the characters clearly conceived? If not, why not? Is Arnold as careful with details as Milton or Homer? Does the imaginative world represented in the poem bear any resemblance to the actual world? Is the truth of one the counterpart of that of the other? Are the proportions the same? How does the imaginative world interpret the meaning of the actual world?

(*f*) What is the general emotional tone of the poem? Is it of like intensity throughout the poem? Does it vary with characters or with incidents? Are there subsidiary emotions? Are these always associated respectively with the same characters? Is it the result of what the characters are, or of what they do, or of what they say? In this respect how does "Sohrab and Rustum" compare with the "Iliad" and "Paradise Lost"? Is there general harmony of emotion? Is there any humor? Is there anything ugly? Do women play any part in this poem? Is there any evidence of domestic affection? of personal friendship? of personal ambition? of the romantic? Account for things being as they are.

(*g*) Does the poem require any special knowledge on the part of the reader? In this respect how does it compare with the "Iliad" and "Paradise Lost"? Does the author make much use of geography and history and legend? Does the author in person philosophize much about what

is going on in his story? Does he give striking or suggestive thoughts by way of comment? Are any of the characters especially thoughtful or informing? Do you remember any thoughtful lines from the poem? Does the poem as a whole reflect any penetrating insight into the meaning of life? What ideas does the poem bring to your attention? Does it give you any thought material for meditation? What? Does it become more suggestive as you become more familiar with it?

V. THE NOVEL

Silas Marner

(*a*) Read the novel through and try to state as concisely as possible the major idea the story has brought to your mind. Is this what was in the mind of the author? On the title-page of the first edition of this novel we find the following quotation from Wordsworth:

> "A child, more than all other gifts
> That earth can offer to declining man,
> Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts."

Why was this quotation printed here? Does it throw any light on the author's purpose in writing the book? Somewhere John Fiske says that man owes his superiority to the other animals, his civilization, to the long period of human infancy. Explain what Mr. Fiske means. What has this to do with the theme of George Eliot's novel? Show in detail how she plans her story to represent clearly her conception of this truth as she understands it. Why is the book divided into two parts? What is done in Part I? in Part II? Is there any matter that has no direct bearing on the theme of the story? Is the conception of life as represented true? Are there any false representations? Point out direct comments by the author in

person that help the reader to a sure knowledge of her theme.

(*b*) According to the pyramid form of representing plot discussed in Chapter VII, make a diagram of the plot of "Silas Marner," inserting all of the incidents in their proper places. Is the plot simple or compound? Is the plot designed in any way for the effect of contrast? Explain. What is the purpose of the Lantern Yard episode in Marner's life? Is this necessary for the theme of the story? Is the plot effectively motivated? Is the motivation plausible? What purpose is served by the money Marner saves? Is any account made of the years intervening between Part I and Part II? Is the plot in perfect accord with what the characters are able to carry? Does anything seem strained? Is there sufficient detail in the plot to make the theme clear? Does the author comment too much on what is going on? Trace the incidents through the Marner part of the plot and note carefully the effects on Marner. What changes are wrought in him? Are the changes what might be expected under the given circumstances? Does the plot show an accurate knowledge of human nature?

(*c*) How many characters are there in the novel? Is the society full enough to support the plot and develop the theme? Explain. Which characters are static and which dynamic? Trace the development incident by incident of the dynamic characters? Is the characterization mostly dramatic or explanatory? When dramatic is it shown through what the characters do or through what they say? Illustrate your answer. Is there any difference between the characterization of the men and of the women? If so, which is the better? Is there any direct character contrast? Explain. Is the conversation adequate, or does the author in person tell us much that might have been given through conversation among the characters? Study carefully the conversation in the Rainbow, Chapter VI; in

the Blue Room, and in the large parlor, Chapter XI. Is the conversation better done when men are alone, when women are alone, or when the society is mixed? Is the characterization vivid enough in the physical sense that you can see the people and hear their voices? Could you draw them, or make them up for representation on the stage? What is the author's primary purpose in characterization? In this novel is George Eliot's chief interest in her characters or in a truth she wishes to impress upon the reader?

(*d*) When and where is the scene of the story laid? What is the purpose of the opening paragraphs? Are there any fine pieces of nature setting for special incidents in the story? Mention specifically. Is the social setting of the story proper and adequate? Is there any foreshadowing of events through setting? If so, mention cases. Is the interest of the author ever in the setting of her story *per se?*

(*e*) Is the world of "Silas Marner" real? Which is more vividly conceived, the outer world of the senses or the inner states of mind of the characters? Is the author more impressed with how the world in which her characters live looks, or with what they think and feel in it? Is there anything fanciful or irrational in the novel? Does the world of the story reflect an ideal world in the author's mind? What are some outstanding characteristics of this ideal world? How has she represented this to you? Can you tell from her approval or disapproval of the characters and their actions, how she thinks people ought to be and act? Cite specific cases? Is her criticism of actual life direct, or through presenting an ideal with which it may be compared or contrasted? Think out carefully and support your answer with evidence from the novel.

(*f*) Is there a general emotional tone to the story? Are incidents provided to arouse various qualities and degrees of feeling? Support your answer with concrete evidence. Is feeling ever heightened by contrast? Cite cases. Does

the author ever strengthen the emotional effect of scenes and incidents by directly suggesting a thought accompaniment for the mood? Give concrete evidence. Are the qualities and degrees of feeling in harmony with the characters and incidents of the story? Is feeling aroused more by what the characters do, by what happens to them, by what they think and say, or by what the author says in person as the story proceeds? Can the author create strong emotion in the finest sense of the term? Cite some cases. Is there any humor in the novel? Anything tragic? Anything comic? If so, how are these effects produced?

(*g*) Is this book especially thoughtful? Is the thought expressed more in the construction of the plot, and in what the characters say, or in the direct comments of the author? In Chapter XIV concerning Eppie and Marner the author says: "As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory; as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness." In what sense is this a general statement of the chief notion in the theme of the story? Can you find parallel passages? Again in the same chapter, she says: "In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently toward a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's." Show how the novel is an illustration of this truth.

VI. THE DRAMA

Julius Cæsar

(*a*) Select for study some well annotated edition of the play. Read the play through using the notes to explain

the language in obscure passages. Having read the play carefully so that it is clearly in mind as a complete work, try to state concisely what aspect of life Shakespeare has represented here. Pick out the leading characters and decide if the careers of any of these are tragic. What is there about any of these that is tragic? What is the cause of the tragedy? What is the nature of the tragic guilt in this play? Do you feel that any of the characters are directly responsible for what takes place? If so, in what way? With which character or characters do you find yourself in sympathy? Give reason for your sympathies. Are they justifiable? Do not answer without careful examination of causes. Is there any comedy in the play? If so, point out specific cases and explain the sources of comic effect. Is there a variety of emotion in this play? Does it extend over considerable range? Explain. What are the major ideas brought out in the play? Is the play a fair and accurate representation of tragedy in the lives of individuals involved in great political movements that mark crisis in the destinies of nations? Explain. How does this arouse the pity and fear that constitute the essence of tragedy? What keen insight into human nature does the play reveal?

(*b*) What forces does the plot represent in conflict? Is it a struggle of man against man, of man against fate, idea against idea? Is the struggle in the minds of the characters, or is it in the world of affairs? Make a diagram of the plot, giving each scene and character its proper place and office in the whole scheme. Is the plot definitely and plausibly motivated? Is the plot constructed to bring out any truths of human life? Explain specifically. Does anything happen contrary to history? If so, can you find any reason for the change? Is the final outcome of the action just to all of the characters? Is the world as represented ideally just? What changes would you make?

(*c*) Are the characters equally well drawn? If not,

which are the better? Are the characters better delineated through what they do, through what they think and say, or through what other characters say about them? In this respect make special studies of Cæsar, Brutus, Cassius, and Antony. As revealed in the play, are the outer actions of these characters consistent with their inner natures? Cite specific instances. Examine carefully the speeches and soliloquies of the characters. Is any one superior to the others in noble ideas? Which seems to be the best judge of human nature? Are there any opportunists among them? Which is guided by the soundest principles of conduct? Which is the better politician? Why? Does this play give you any insight into the inner working of the minds of politicians and statesmen? In this respect how does the play differ from history and biography? Study Plutarch's lives of these men and see what Shakespeare has done that Plutarch could not do. Are any of these men dishonest? wholly good, or wholly bad? In what sense are these men the victims of forces acting within them and around them? Are any of these forces in themselves evil? Which character do you pity most?

(*d*) Is the historical setting of the play appropriate for a political tragedy? Reasons for your answer. Are there any special settings for particular scenes or incidents? Give instances.

(*e*) Is the play in any way constructed so that we become aware of an ideal world in the light of which what goes on in the play is judged? Do you find yourself passing judgment? If so, on what basis or authority is the judgment made? Is there any contrast of character or of action to clarify the conception of the ideal world? Which of the characters is the more imaginative, the more logical, the more sensuous, the more emotional? Is the style of the play generally rich in imagery and figurative expression? Is it especially beautiful and poetic? Is there any

difference in the language of the different characters? Explain.

(*f*) What is the prevailing emotional tone of the play? Is there harmony among the variety of lesser emotions? Is your feeling stirred more in connection with some characters than with others? With which is it strongest? Is it due to what the character does, or says, or to what happens to him? Does the feeling change with the music of the language? Is it in any way affected by the thought? Do you find your feeling toward certain characters changing from time to time through the play? If so, to what are the changes due? Are your emotions at all times justifiable by the circumstances? Is the play especially sentimental? Does the author try to create and arrange images for the sole purpose of exciting a high degree of feeling? If so, where?

(*g*) What general line of thought has gone into the making of this play? What does it tell us about the relation of individual men to great social and political movements? What does it tell us about affairs of state? Are the interests of the state ever considered apart from the personal interests of politicians and statesmen? Illustrate from the play. How do conflicting notions of statesmen affect the policies of government? Do personal likes and dislikes of men affect their attitudes toward public questions and social issues? Illustrate from the play. What confidence can one have in popular majorities? What are the qualifications of successful leadership? Illustrate from the play. Is the play especially rich in thoughtful comment on life and the behavior of men? Note specific cases. Are many lines quoted for their thought-content? Cite specific passages. Having studied the play, show how it has enlarged your range of experience. What meaning of life has it revealed to you?

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